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# THINGS ANCIENT AND MODERN

BY

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*With a Frontispiece from  
a photograph by S. Logan*

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## PREFACE

THE humorist who said that a preface is quite literally a "foregone conclusion" was not without justification: it too often consists of an attempt to sum up in nervous English the theories which the book is to endeavour to justify. I have read the following pages so often myself that I do not feel equal to the task of summarizing their contents: if, in the words of Mr. Culchard, I were to say that they appear to me to contain "profound truths stated with masterly precision," that would be of little help to the reviewer.

Let me for his benefit try rather to say what the book is not: it is not an autobiography, as indeed why should it be? it is not a defence of public schools, though it is in some measure an attempt to explain them: it is not an apology for the Church of England, for I agree with King George III that it needs none: it is not a treatise on education, for it would be silly for a small market gardener to attempt in his retirement to produce a standard work on Agriculture as a whole. It is not (I hope) pontifical, though it is undeniably personal, and though it is occasionally didactic I trust that it is not dull.

More than that I find it difficult to say. There is a well-authenticated anecdote of a railway porter who, infuriated by a lady's repeated inquiries for her trunk, exclaimed at last, "H'if yer was the h'elephant as yer h'ought to be instead of the blooming jackass that yer h'are, yer'd know where your trunk was soon enough": in the same spirit, though with no trace of his exasperation, I say to the potential reader, "If you will do me the honour of reading what I have written, instead of asking me to tell you about it, you will know quite soon enough whether I have anything to say which you, of your charity, may care to hear."

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## CHAPTER I

### I

IN case it is necessary that I should introduce myself to the reader by name, I would explain that my first name is the result of an accident. My father was under instructions to call me Cecil, but being a man notoriously incapable of remembering names, and having to baptize me in haste and in private (for my life was almost despaired of) he made, as I think, a fortunate error. Of my second name I will only say that it does not deserve the compliment paid me by the Buenos Aires *Herald* on the occasion of my wedding; which assumed that I was called after the South American Republic. Those who wish for more information about the Argentine family will find it in Camden's *Britannia* under Hertfordshire.

My surname has been traced with some completeness and considerable lack of distinction to a man who was Treasurer of Ireland under Henry III. This measure of antiquity did not satisfy a gentleman referred to by Pepys as "a young silly lord": he employed a herald to make further researches, and was gratified by receiving a pedigree going back to a mythical ancestor who was "under-marshal of the field of Battle." This imaginary pedigree nearly led to my father's being called Solomon, in honour of an



equally mythical "Sir Salomon" who was "a main doer in the building of Westminster Abbey."

My brother was called Hildebrand in honour of the under-marshal, and this led to a coincidence so strange as to be worth recalling. He was at Magdalen, and on the day when he was ordained priest there was ordained a deacon who had been at Magdalene, Cambridge, whose Christian name was Alington and whose surname was Hildebrand. It is a story which I never like to tell unless I know that there is a Clergy List in the house.

I have some hereditary claims on Lincolnshire, but "a residential qualification," of which I make full use, for wishing Kent to win the county championship. If I say that I am now a convinced Northerner, it must not be held to disqualify me for a deep affection for Wiltshire and Dorset in the south and Herefordshire and Shropshire in the west.

## 2

It is obviously of great importance to find the right title for this book. I do not disguise from myself that it labours (quite apart from its own inadequacy) under some very grave disadvantages. In the first place education—and it must inevitably concern itself in great measure with education—is a subject upon which most people are very ready to talk and very unwilling to listen. After all, we have all of us been educated somehow or other, which gives us a

certain prescriptive right to be heard, and if that education was mistaken in its methods and disappointing in its results, what can be more reasonable than that we should be allowed the opportunity of denouncing it?

Again, the British nation has a very healthy dislike of anything that can be called expert knowledge. The politician knows that nothing appeals so strongly to the electorate as a declaration from one of his own children—the younger the better—that he is well qualified for a seat in Parliament; the editor knows that his readers expect him to ask opinions on controversial subjects from those least likely to give an informed judgment. I cannot otherwise account for my receiving a reply-paid telegram asking what changes I should suggest in the course for the Grand National: it was the only occasion on which I can claim to have made money from the turf.

The popular liking for sermons by distinguished laymen can, in the mind of most clergy, only be explained in a similar way; this may, no doubt, be due to professional prejudice, but I think that most of us feel on listening to the average lay sermon that it is very like what we said when we began. It is very likely that it is better than anything which we are saying now, but the point is that, whether it is better or worse, the public like it better when it comes from one who may be regarded as an amateur. I doubt if there is any other country which so whole-heartedly prefers the amateur to the professional, nor where

the prejudice is so strongly in favour of the weaker side. The one thing which no Englishman ever desires is that the better side may win; if he has no personal reasons for prejudice, he is full of hope that the weaker side may pull off a surprising victory and the expert giants be overthrown.

I should be very sorry indeed to call myself an "expert" on education, but I cannot deny that I am, or have been, a schoolmaster, and that to many minds is a damning disqualification for a hearing. To the English mind the term connotes hide-bound prejudice: to describe a man as behaving like a schoolmaster is almost as serious as to describe a policy or a personality as academic. Some lines of Mr. Arthur Benson, himself a distinguished schoolmaster, describe the popular conception of the title:

He cannot talk or argue: he must still  
Be lecturing. . . .  
He deems that contradiction is a vice  
Deserves the block. . . .  
And if you seek to stir him from his place,  
Instant he clings with some ethereal glue,  
Which frets and blunts the inserted pocket-knife.

To put it bluntly, most people feel that schoolmasters have had a great many opportunities of telling them what they ought to think when they were young, and they see no reason why the process should be continued in later years.

Lastly, I have had the honour for many years to be connected with Eton, and Eton, like many other

peculiarly English institutions, is one which the general public hates at least as much as it loves. This is in no sense a book about Eton, though I may possibly have the opportunity of showing that, whatever may be the faults of that particular school, they are not those commonly attributed to it. In any case, Eton is no more responsible for my views on education than the two other schools which I have intimately known. I remember a preacher who began his sermon in Lower Chapel at Eton by saying that he had some claim to speak, having had experience of three public schools. He would have been distressed to know that a small boy afterwards said to his tutor: "Sir, that preacher must have been rather a bad hat, mustn't he? He said he'd been sacked from two schools!" If I make a similar claim I hope I shall not expose myself to the same imputation.

For all these reasons and for many others (" 'Many, many others,' said Michael Finsbury with drunken gravity") it is very desirable that an attractive title should be found; what a difference the fortunate inspiration of *Holy Deadlock* must have made to the sales! One might hope for some help from alliteration, but the letter D is singularly unhelpful. *Pages from a Dean's Diary* might do, if I had ever kept one; *A Dean's Doubts* seems too tentative; *A Dean's Dogmas* too defined, and words like dotage, drivel, dodderings have only to be considered to be rejected. So I fear the publishers will have

to do their best about that: I will only here attempt to say what the book is, and what it is not. It is not a considered pronouncement on education as a whole: my experience, though not short, has been confined to a very small part of the English field, and I am very conscious of that limitation. It is not an autobiography, for I know of no reason for supposing that the public is interested in the annals of Head Masters or of Deans, nor indeed of any reason why they should be. It is rather an attempt to set down some of the conclusions which I have formed, and some of the reasons which have led me to form them: as these reasons are largely personal, I shall have to say a little about my own experiences, but I shall try to remember that it is only in so far as they serve to illustrate some general principle that they are likely to interest my readers.

NOTE.—When I tried to find a topical Eton title, the only suggestion which came from my family was *A Long Lie*, which is obviously unsuitable.

## 3

From the point of view which I have suggested, I cannot feel that my childhood contained any episodes which can be regarded as of general interest. It is on record that I was abnormally slow in learning to read, and that even when I had a nodding acquaintance with the words cat and mat, I was as

likely to proclaim that the mat was on the cat as to assign them to their proper places. It was at this stage in my intellectual development that there fell into my hands an illustrated edition of Harrison Ainsworth's *Tower of London*: I saw the picture of someone (wasn't it the villain Renard?) being forced backwards out of a loophole at the sword's point. The cat and the mat were forgotten: I decided then and there that reading was a desirable accomplishment, and I verily believe that the *Tower of London* was the first book I ever read. There may be a moral to that anecdote, and it may even be a good one, but I cannot believe that it is creditable to myself.

Another curious and even better authenticated fact is that one of the first real books of my own which I possessed, at the age of eight, was *Handley Cross*; I had never lived in a hunting country, but I was so fascinated by it that I learnt pages of it by heart, and read it so assiduously that my copy needed rebinding. That anecdote has no moral, but may be regarded as some slight proof of the genius of Surtees. Mr. Jorrocks and James Pigg were very living characters to me, though neither then nor since have I greatly enjoyed the author's other works.

The only remarkable occurrence of my childhood which memory preserves is that I once killed a swallow with a cricket ball. As I was at the moment bowling lobs to one of my aunts I was rather the

occasion than the cause of the tragedy: but the fact is undoubted.

It is often complained by the less reasonable type of parent that a boy when he leaves school ought to have some clear idea of the profession which he wishes to adopt: a little thought will show that the only two professions of which the average boy has any intimate and direct knowledge are that of his father and that of the schoolmaster: he may know with some certainty that he does not want to adopt either of these: he may think that he wants to adopt one of them: but that is as far as we have any real right to expect him to go.

When I was at Shrewsbury I endeavoured to collect some statistics bearing on the point by getting all boys to fill in a form showing both their father's profession and that which they intended themselves to pursue. One of the first to come in read as follows: "Father's profession—Deceased. Intended profession—Dying." I thought I was being mocked, till I discovered that the family were well known as dyers in Kidderminster.

My father had been a schoolmaster for a few years, but at the time of my birth and for many years after he was an Inspector of Schools. I cannot remember ever wishing to follow in his steps as an Inspector, but must confess that it was always my ambition to be a schoolmaster. I realize, as I have said, the horrid implications of such a confession, and can only take refuge in the humble plea presented

to my father by a candidate for the post of pupil teacher. "My object in becoming a teacher" he wrote, "is to instruct those more ignorant than myself, if any such I will meet." "The vanity of teaching" as the great Lord Halifax said, "doth often tempt a man to forget that he is a blockhead." But here, at least, was a modest beginning, and I must needs hope that my motives were equally modest.

I used sometimes to accompany my father on horseback when he went to pay some of those "visits without notice" which were in those days the terror of elementary schoolmasters. I remember on one occasion, when I was holding the horses while he visited the boys' school in a certain village, seeing a small boy hurry out, hotly pursued by my father, to the girls' school next door. I learnt afterwards that the teachers of the two departments were man and wife, and that he, like a good husband, wished to warn her of the danger impending. It was my first introduction to that *esprit de corps* and that dislike of superior authority which are so characteristic of English education.

We hear a good deal nowadays of the rigours of nineteenth century homes. I did not suffer from them and I fail to recognize many of the pictures drawn of Victorian childhood. We had far fewer distractions: we did not see much of the countryside, unless we were brave enough to ride high bicycles: we were not enlightened by wireless or deafened with jazz: we played tennis with rackets that did not drive



very hard and balls that did not bounce as well as they do nowadays: but in spite of all these deprivations we were by no means unhappy, and, if we had more time for reading than the modern generation enjoys, we had not learnt how much easier it is to listen to other people talking about what to read and how to pronounce it when read.

I must confess that our religion was somewhat of the repressive kind, but that was perhaps because Tunbridge Wells was a noted centre of Evangelicalism, and the Evangelicals, with all their merits, are curiously unconcerned to emphasize that the Gospel is in every sense of the word "good news." I am afraid that I suffered from that dominance of the Old Testament which fixes the attention on the negative aspect of Christianity, and regarded it, as a boy, with a certain amount of very reverent distaste.

Tunbridge Wells was not to the young a very attractive town. A cynical friend of mine, seeking in vain for feminine charm, described it, in a phrase showing more Biblical knowledge than reverence, as "the little city of the plain," and in the mental picture which memory draws the foreground is filled with stout ladies driven from large stucco houses by stout coachmen presiding over pairs of stout horses. It is true that as a boy I once composed a poem in its honour for a prize competition in a local paper, but my motives were sordid. I sent it in under the name of the family butler, who was much surprised to find himself Honourably Mentioned.

Those who like to hunt for indications of future activities in the tastes of childhood (and such indications are usually most misleading) may be interested to know that one of my chief amusements as a child was the conducting of the affairs of a large imaginary school. I can myself remember nothing of it, except that it was situated in a place known as Cookey, and that, though I have no recollection that it was a co-educational establishment, a lady was associated with me in the management. I have no recollection of anything about her except her name, which was the surprising one of Miss Tupden Adven: the first syllable was pronounced to rhyme with *dupe*, and our relationship, though I believe harmonious, was of the most strictly business character.

Of my first private school I remember very little which is germane to the subject: it was not till I went to my first boarding school, just before I was twelve, that I first consciously encountered a teacher of real distinction.

Before I say anything of him and his methods I should like to pay a brief tribute to the part played by preparatory schools in English education: they are not by any means all equally good: some of them (in my humble opinion) welcome boys too young (though that is the parents' fault), and wish to keep them too long: many of them seem to me to have worshipped educational gods of very doubtful divinity, and some of them are absurdly expensive.

But as a whole they are invaluable: one realizes this in America, where the public school boy (as we should call him) starts his real education at least a couple of years too late: that is the simple reason why an English boy of seventeen or so who comes to an American school for a year finds himself ahead of contemporaries who are at least as intelligent as himself. As I have mentioned this possibility I should like to say how valuable such an experience is. The American schools have been amazingly generous in their invitation to boys from English public schools, and their kindness deserves more recognition than it has received. It is a kindness which, partly for the reason already mentioned, it is difficult for us to reciprocate in kind, but anyone who believes, as I do, that the best political hope for the world lies in a good understanding between the English-speaking peoples cannot but welcome it most warmly. I shall hope to say more about American schools and schoolboys in another connection.

To return from this digression, or rather from these digressions, I can never be sufficiently thankful that my Head Master—it is a pleasure to record his name, Mr. Lloyd, of Hartford House, Winchfield—was a teacher of genius, and a genius of the old school. He was firmly convinced that the laws of grammar were things which could be learnt, and must be learnt right, and that for any boy who had any pretensions to scholarship this was the first and

essential step. He was as furious at a needless blunder as he was at a loose return when he was keeping wicket, or, if he was not really furious, had the invaluable gift of pretending to be so. With most of us indignation tends to become a habit, but there are some gifted schoolmasters who continue to the end of their days to be, or to seem, genuinely startled at a breach of propriety, whatever the subject matter may be. Such a one was Mr. de Havilland at Eton, known (probably for this very reason) as one of the greatest of coaches on the river. I never had occasion to tremble under his reproofs in this capacity, but I recognized the same quality when I knew him as a housemaster: any trace of bad manners on the part of one of his pupils roused him at once to an amazed indignation, and as that probably brought on a fit of coughing (for he was a victim of asthma), the delinquent was left with the impression that his tutor's blood would assuredly be on his head.

It is no injustice to de Havilland to say that grammatical errors would have left him comparatively unmoved. Mr. Lloyd had no mercy on them: well do I remember standing on a form for a considerable time repeating sadly, "ἐχω with an adverb means 'to be'": that, and the picture of him standing with his wicketkeeping gloves raised above his head in a despairing invocation of heaven as the ball thrown in went two yards wide, recall Hartford House in its great days. And they were great days:

I do not suppose that any preparatory school has ever had such a record of scholarships, and the result was mainly due to him. His assistant masters sometimes thought him arbitrary, and compared his establishment to "the school of one Tyrannus" mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles, but I have never met an old pupil of his who was not grateful to him.

It is sometimes claimed as a great reform that preparatory schools are now more attentive to what Mr. Jeeves calls "the psychology of the individual," and endeavour to discover and to stimulate his tastes. This is, of course, all to the good, unless it is allowed to obscure the primary fact that there are certain things which a little boy must learn whatever his tastes may be. It is no good pleading a distaste for arithmetic as an excuse for not learning the multiplication table, and the rules of grammar have as strong a claim. As a matter of fact, the average small boy does not very greatly care what he does learn: he is more docile then than he is ever going to be again, and if his masters are determined that something *must* be learnt, learnt it will be.

Nor need it be thought that he will necessarily dislike the process. That great educationalist, Bishop Creighton, used to declare that "the British boy hates learning for its own sake" without any regard to its type, but it is at least equally true that the average small boy, British or otherwise, likes learning anything for its own sake, and it is very desirable

that, while the going is good, he should be encouraged to travel over the most necessary ground.

As far as I remember, we were never "taught" English, but I do not really think our education suffered thereby. Mr. Lloyd was a fine reader and used to read to us a good deal. I have a vivid recollection of *King Solomon's Mines*, which had then just appeared. It is perhaps a sign of advancing years, but I must confess that the boys' books of the present day seem to me inferior to those which we then read with avidity. Ballantyne was our favourite author, and I am quite sure that *The Dog Crusoe* deserves to survive, whether it does so or not. There was always in Ballantyne an improving chapter in the middle which could be skipped with impunity, and for the rest the young heroes whose adventures we devoured were very natural people, not too great or too good for human nature's daily food.

Next, though at a considerable interval, came W. H. G. Kingston with his *Three Midshipmen* who rose, inevitably but not monotonously, to *Three Admirals*, and, again some way behind, Henty, who taught one a good deal of history, not without occasional tedium. No doubt their modern successors are excellent people, but none of them seem to make the same universal appeal. Of course boys now read books not primarily written for them, and, much though I enjoy P. G. Wodehouse or the modern detective story, I am old-fashioned enough to think that they should come later in life. And

there are many very inferior authors, so popular and so inferior that I will not risk the law of libel by even hinting at their names.

What we read was good of its kind, and we were at any rate encouraged to read the great novelists. I am not sure that there is not some danger in doing so too young: I suffered from an early overdose of Thackeray and, much as I enjoyed it then, have suffered from reaction since. A great deal of nonsense is talked about holiday tasks, and their effect in killing a love for the author who has to be studied under these conditions. Most holiday tasks of a literary kind do little good, but they certainly do no harm: the love of literature which is so feeble as to perish at the hint of compulsion is too delicate a plant to be worth nourishing, and every here and there the holiday task certainly introduces a boy to an author whom he is destined to love.

American schools have, as it seems to me, an easier task and a better tradition: our literature is sufficiently foreign for them to study it as a subject requiring real attention. I am writing this in a Connecticut school, and my two neighbours at luncheon both gave me illustrations of the point. One had just been made to read *Barchester Towers* (which he did not enjoy), and regretted having had to part with *Pride and Prejudice*, which he had been set to read the week before: my other neighbour was in some trouble, having been bidden to write a two-thousand-word essay on the works of Galsworthy.

I felt that such methods were comparatively rare with us, and was moved to some admiration.

But to return to my private school : we were made to learn a good deal of poetry by heart, without much explanation, and I find, as most people do, that poetry acquired early has a way of sticking in the mind. To hear saying lessons, or repetition, is for a schoolmaster one of the most loathsome of tasks, and I am afraid that the weakness of human nature tends to abbreviate it as much as possible, but I am sure that this is a pity. Poetry, often not appreciated at the time, is an everlasting possession, and, like Wordsworth's daffodils, can fill the heart with unexpected pleasure many years after the first, almost unconscious, acquaintance with it was made. I still vividly remember some of the poetry I learnt before I was fourteen : but, curiously enough, my most vivid recollection is not of anything I had to learn by heart, but of a book read to us on Sunday evenings one term when infection kept us away from the village church. It was about the eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews to which it applied the fine phrase, " the Westminster Abbey of the Saints." I came across the book years afterwards and saw little else in it, and I only chronicle the small incident as a testimony to the power of a phrase. Like many other Englishmen, I feel an enduring gratitude to my private school, and can testify to its permanent influence on my life.

Preparatory schools have changed much since my



day: I know from the testimony of a very trustworthy eyewitness of one school where a boy of my generation was publicly flogged for using the word "fool." It is true that he had called the Head Master a fool, though not to his face, but it was very clearly explained that that had nothing to do with it. He had used a word forbidden by the highest authority, and the school shuddered at the thought that it had nursed a blasphemous viper in its bosom. I should not tell this story if I did not know it to be true: similar scenes may, for all I know, be enacted to-day among the Fundamentalists in Tennessee, but it is improbable that they have occurred in England in the last half-century.

## CHAPTER II

IT was in 1886 that I first made my acquaintance with one of those public schools with which I was to be intimately associated for nearly half a century. I shall have a good deal more to say about them, and here will only draw attention to a fact which most English people accept as normal, but which strikes most foreigners as a paradox. It is that the Englishman, with comparatively few exceptions, has a very real and deep affection for his school and a very friendly feeling for at least some of his instructors. Both sentiments may, no doubt, be mistaken, but the point is that it is only among the English-speaking peoples that any such sentiments are inspired, and the fact has a very real significance.

In some cases the former sentiment not only crystallizes round a place, but is partly inspired by the beauty of its buildings, or its surroundings. When I come to speak of Shrewsbury I shall have the opportunity of quoting a tribute by a great master of English prose to the Severn and all that it means in a boy's life. At Marlborough there was much to inspire the same feelings, though I cannot express them so eloquently. The old Castle Inn, the centre round which the school is built, is one of the best examples of English domestic architecture at its best

period, and both it and its garden have an effect on boys long before they are conscious of the spell. I should like to put on record my sense of the importance of such surroundings. I will not insult the schools which seem to me deficient in such things by mentioning their names, for no doubt an equally real sentiment can gather round unattractive buildings in a dullish town, but it was certainly a liberal education, in this sense, to be at Marlborough—to walk down its broad High street and to look up to the matchless green of Savernake Forest, to wander among its glorious beeches or to climb the slopes of Martinsell. And then on the other side were the Downs, and anyone who has ever felt the thrill of those open spaces will suffer both from a superiority complex and a despair of conveying to a stranger what they have meant to him.

No, boys are outwardly extremely indifferent to their surroundings, but they learn afterwards what they owe to them: there is hardly any action on which I look back with more pride than on having helped to preserve for Marlburians the Adderley Library—probably the most delightful room of study to which any English boy has access. It is all the more valuable there because, in spite of what I have just said, many Marlborough boys live their daily lives in buildings the squalor of which no amount of patriotic affection can lead one to deny.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> I am glad to record that as a member of the Marlborough Council I have just had the chance of voting for an expenditure which will do much towards removing this reproach.

The education at Marlborough when I went there was of the conservative type: if I say that during the whole of my time there no attempt of any kind was made to teach me any sort of science, it will be realized that I date from the dark ages. When I mentioned this fact recently to Dr. Stephen Leacock he was so much shocked that I could not resist adding that I was very glad of it, which shocked him still more. I shall try to show later that I was not merely trying to be funny or uttering wanton blasphemy against a great subject.

How much has been gained by half a century of reform is a matter to be discussed later. French was taught in a somewhat perfunctory manner: I remember that in the Sixth Form we studied Guizot's *Histoire de la Civilisation*, and as "*civilisation*" was one of the harder words, our preparation time was largely devoted to brewing and consuming a mixture which was called (I think) Edwardes' Desiccated Soup. When we arrived in school, our time was devoted in large measure to tracking the derivation of various French words: we often wrote down O.G. (for *Origine Germanique*), and with still greater pleasure O.I. (for *Origine Inconnue*). This was a harmless sport, but cannot be said to have done much to fit us for the interplay of conversation with our Gallic neighbours.

Mathematics were pursued to the level of the Higher Certificate Examination, and I look back with loathing on many a wasted hour. I was even

introduced to statics, and was confronted with a thing called "the Danish steelyard"—but as no one ever corrected my first impression that it was a spot where the Danes, for some mysterious reason, kept their steel, I did not derive much advantage from the study. But on the whole subject of Mathematics for the unmathematical I shall later on have at least as much to say as my readers can bear: here I will only say that the reason why I learnt Algebra is as obscure to me to-day as it was in the days when I suffered from it, and that those of my instructors whom I have had the chance of consulting are unable to throw any light upon the question.

History was taught in those distant days by the ordinary classical masters, and as the history which we studied was in the main that of Greece and Rome, this arrangement did not sound as absurd as in fact it was. Such modern history as we learnt was entirely English, acquired with the aid of fairly adequate text-books, but not illuminated by any semblance of knowledge or enthusiasm on the part of the teacher. The story how I first discovered the fascination of the subject seems to me to have some morals for the educationalist.

The first moral is probably a bad one, for it shows the influence of that competitive spirit which we are constantly bidden to deplore. I confess that as a young boy I was much interested in securing prizes—in fact I think that that was the only motive which really appealed to me. I was not at first markedly

successful, and a failure to win one for English literature was ill balanced by the acquisition of one for geography. There were two prizes and two competitors, and I secured the second prize, so it was not a brilliant achievement. But I had tasted blood.

In the Sixth Form at Marlborough there was an institution known by the name of "compulsory prizes": it was not really as attractive as it sounds, for it only meant that we all had to compete for a prize in one of three or four subjects. I surveyed the field with a predatory eye. Philology made no appeal to me, and I was sure that many better scholars would have marked that for their own; the same was true of Divinity and of one or two other possibilities, so by a process of elimination, and with a single eye for reward, I selected the History Prize.

So far the tale is purely discreditable, though it would be unreasonable for me, considering all I owe to their pursuit, to join in the denunciation of prizes as unworthy objects of desire. The rest of the story is of more general interest. The books prescribed were one of Froude's *Short Studies* about Erasmus and Luther, and a large chunk of Robertson's *Charles V.* Of the charm of Froude it is needless to speak; I had the opportunity later on of attending his lectures at Oxford on the same subject, and found it very interesting to observe how, as the influence of his master Carlyle faded into the past, his sympathies

veered round to Erasmus and away from the hero Luther.

But it was Robertson, strange to say, who made the real impression. His history is a book which I should find it hard to read to-day, for the style is singularly unattractive: he has a habit of beginning every sentence with a past participle which recalls the methods of Dr. Maclear, though he never accomplishes a sentence so classic as that in which the latter describes Noah's indignation with his son: "deeply moved by Ham's unfilial conduct, the aged patriarch broke into prophetic blessings and cursings." But, with all its defects, Robertson's book opened my eyes to a new world. Till then I had vaguely imagined that history was a science completely occupied with men called George or William or Henry: it was a revelation to find it dealing with Rudolph of Hapsburg or Maximilian the Penniless. I felt, to compare small things with great, as Keats did when he first read in Spenser about "sea-should'ring whales," and from that moment mediaeval history laid a spell upon me to which I owe much of my enjoyment and no inconsiderable portion of my success in life.

I began to read history for myself, and, to cut the autobiographical portion of my story as short as possible, I may say here that when I sat for a history Fellowship at All Souls I did so without ever having been taught history by an expert, and entirely on the strength of my own private reading.

To this, of course, there is a large exception to be

made: the "Greats" school at Oxford provided an admirable training in the subject, for there one studies two short and compact periods in the original authorities, without being distracted by the multiplicity of material which tends to make modern history a weariness of the flesh. I have always felt that for anyone who wishes to study the subject, the ideal preliminary is to know one period really well. Seeley may have been right or wrong when he said that past history is present politics, but Thucydides certainly was right when he drew attention to the permanence of human nature, and a close acquaintance with the career of Cleon is no bad preparation for the student of (should we say?) American political history.

The other great intellectual discovery which I made at Marlborough was the delights of English literature. Here we were fortunate enough to be taught by a real genius in his subject, Mr. Lewis Upcott—to whom I and all my contemporaries owe an incalculable debt. I don't think that we realized it at the time, and that fact may perhaps bring comfort to some good teachers who need it. Mr. Upcott was not a great disciplinarian, or perhaps he felt, with good reason, that a Sixth Form ought not to need dragooning. We did not know how much we were learning, and sometimes prided ourselves on our inattention, but his knowledge and his enthusiasm were doing their work, and I am sure that very many of his pupils recall his name with gratitude.



We began, some of us, to try to write verse—a pursuit which has at least the advantage that it inflicts no pain on other people, however little it may edify them. In my own case the taste had already been implanted at home: my father and I used to make a practice of writing Alphabets in verse about places which we visited on holiday, or other subjects which presented themselves. I still remember some lines about the great Australian XI which devastated England in the eighties.

A was the famous Australian eleven,  
 B with Bannerman, Boyle, Bonnor, Blackham and seven  
 Who Beat the Bold Briton from Scotland to Devon.  
 C the Counties they Crushed and the Clubs which they  
     wrecked,  
     A Career, by the way, which at Cambridge was  
     Checked.

It is possible that a few of my elderly readers may like to be reminded of that great and unexpected triumph. I still remember with pride the first occasion when I saw myself in print in the *Marlburian*, and the still greater pride with which I saw my poem quoted with approval in another school journal. I look back with less elation on the verses which won me a poetry prize, for they were frankly very bad, but there is a little moral attached to that story. The year before I had been "honourably mentioned" for a poem in the Spenserian stanza of which I am not at all ashamed: the year when I was successful I chose a long loose metre, with lamentable

results: and ever since then I have known that it was right to urge the budding versifier to attempt a difficult metre—and above all things to shun the delusive facility of blank verse. I am strongly of the opinion that as many boys as possible should be encouraged to write in metre, for, though their results may be negligible, they will acquire a feeling for rhythm which will do much for their appreciation of the achievements of their betters.

I was lucky enough to pass my youth in the days when Gilbert and Sullivan annually delighted the country, and I am glad to say that I still know a great deal of Gilbert's work by heart. I do not think him a poet, but I am sure that he was a very accomplished metrist, and a very good pattern for the young versifier. Whenever I hear a dispute as to the rival merits of Gilbert and Sullivan I recall the Frenchman's dictum about Homer and Virgil: "*Homère a fait Virgile, dit on; si cela est vrai c'est sans doute son plus bel ouvrage,*" and whether Gilbert made Sullivan or Sullivan Gilbert it is very certain that neither of them ever did anything better. I have just been staying in Pittsburgh and found the intelligent inhabitants rapturous over a recent visit of the Savoy operas. To be appreciated so warmly over more than fifty years of time, and more than 4,000 miles of space, is a sufficient testimony to the genius of that glorious partnership.

The relations between masters and boys at Marlborough, though generally friendly, were not by any

means as close as they have since become in all public schools. I well remember when I first became a master at Eton that the Warden of my College, Sir William Anson, was quite genuinely horrified when I innocently described the dealings of tutors with their pupils. He was a very good Conservative, and there are few matters in which even Liberal Englishmen are more conservative than those which affect their own schools.

I do not think that the general public realize how comparatively modern this change is, nor—a more important point—that no such relationship exists, or could exist, in any non-English-speaking country. I have seen much the same easy good comradeship in American schools, but I fancy one would have a long search to make before anything of the kind was found on the Continent. It may be a finer thing that the pupil should venerate his teacher as a sage, but it is a peculiarly English discovery that he can be treated as an equal and a friend, without any danger to discipline, and that discovery has only been recently made.

I do not mean to suggest that I had no friends among the masters at Marlborough: that would be most untrue: to one of them, the present Bishop of Norwich, I owe more than I can say. Mr. Harold Nicolson in *Some People* has described his work at Wellington, and speaks of him with enthusiasm as a teacher. I think of him rather as a personality which for a good many years dominated my life, and

that of my contemporaries in the Sixth Form, to a very remarkable degree. I can produce no better testimony to the fact than to say that six of us who went to Oxford in the same term founded a small (and I fear short-lived) club with the name The Hexagon, and the motto "We are Seven."

But this, though of interest to ourselves, is of no general concern: what is more interesting is that the result was attained by none of the normal arts of the schoolmaster. Mr. Pollock was by no means conspicuously well read: his library was well stocked with classics and theology (particularly with the works of Westcott), but it contained hardly any works of English literature. I verily believe that there were none except a copy of Tennyson (bound in leather and never to my knowledge opened), a copy of *The Wrecker* (left by Eustace Miles, a disciple of an earlier generation), and a copy of *The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes* (left by E. F. Benson): I never saw either of the last two in use.

Here were we, a set of young prigs who rather prided ourselves on our knowledge of English literature (I remember hot debates on *Departmental Ditties*, and the scandal which that new phenomenon evoked), completely under the spell of a man who confessed to me, when he was Master of Wellington, that he was unfamiliar with the opening lines of Tennyson's "Ode on the Death of the Duke," and simulated ignorance of Wordsworth's "Ode on Intimations of Immortality." The phenomenon can

only be explained by his possession of a very dominant personality: he certainly succeeded in making us take our characters with gravity, and though I am lamentably unable to remember with precision anything that he ever said, I still remember the occasions on which he spoke and the impression which he made.

No doubt his hospitality had some share in his success; boys are very primitive animals, and I recollect how the large attendance at the first meeting of the Archæological Society dwindled when it was discovered that a subject in itself somewhat dry was not to be moistened with tea or flavoured with cake: but Mr. Pollock's influence over the Sixth at Marlborough rested on no mere gastronomic foundation, and I recall with gratitude the moment when a very futile offence led to an exhortation which for the first time induced me to take myself seriously.

Other people no doubt had tried, but I recall with regret that my preparation for Confirmation, though conducted by a very religious man, left no impression on me whatever. That is not quite true, but the exception may be held to prove the rule. At the end of the course he presented me with a small book, very nicely bound and stamped with my initials. I knew, or thought I knew, that he was a poor man: I possibly exaggerated the cost of the gift: anyhow, I felt quite clear that he must care a good deal about the business (which I can never really have doubted), and his kindness did more for me than his

exhortations. It is possible that with many boys at the age usually selected the most that can be hoped for is a real sense that the occasion is important, though the reasons may only become apparent later. At any rate, that was my experience, and I was lucky enough to come from what is called "a religious home." Earlier generations at Marlborough may have been less fortunate: there is one well authenticated story of a master who began his confirmation course by asking the boys the difference between Temptation and Eternity: when they learnt that one was a wile of the devil and the other a devil of a while they had not advanced far upon the Christian road.

To the difficult subject of preparation for Confirmation I may perhaps return later on; here I will only say that there is no such thing as "the ideal age," and no type of preparation which will suit all capacities and temperaments. The difficulty in the way of a school confirmation is that it is almost inevitable to deal with boys in the main as a class, and their problems and their intelligence at any given age differ so widely as to make this a Herculean task. Our object, as loyal members of the Church of England, is rather to make boys think rightly for themselves about religion than to instil cut-and-dried answers to every possible question: of course we fail, but it is not entirely for lack of trying.

Father Hugh Benson, after he joined the Church of Rome, used to refer acidly to his preparation for

confirmation at Eton. He says that his tutor asked him if he had any special difficulties, and that he said "No," though in fact he had a hundred. The implication is that his tutor would have been unwilling or unable to discuss them. Those who happen to know that the tutor in question was Edward Lyttelton will realize the unconscious humour of his complaint, and will have some sympathy with the Eton master whose acid comment was, "Father Benson appears to pride himself on the glib lie which sprang so readily to his lips! "

For my own part, I think I had no "difficulties"—except the very common schoolboy difficulty of lack of interest. I enjoyed the two services which we had every day, and I am perfectly certain that this compulsion, so far from being resented, was welcomed by most of us: I can still feel the annoyance with which we heard the bell which told us that it was too wet for chapel and that we should have prayers in the house instead. No doubt we welcomed it partly as a social occasion, but my own experience convinces me that "compulsory chapel" is not the reason why boys are lax attendants at college chapels and parish churches. It is more probable, to my mind, that they miss services which are reasonably adapted to their needs. We ought, no doubt, to make them more loyal to their Church as a whole: I am here only concerned with a particular criticism.

As I look back on my Marlborough career I feel that I learnt quite as much from my follies and

failures as from my successes. It has been a great help to me in administering justice to boys to know that I committed many of the normal crimes and follies myself. I derive great satisfaction from a certain house group in which, feeling (not quite without reason) that my housemaster ought to have called me to a more prominent place at his side, I determined to show how little I cared. The result is an admirable picture of a Sulky Boy. And I can recall an elementary offence against the laws of honesty so flagrant that it would have been perfectly reasonable to conclude that I had no moral sense at all: it is some consolation to remember that my partner in this crime bore then and since an unblemished character, and now holds a Canonry in the Church. It may not be necessary for doctors to have all diseases, but it is certainly desirable for a schoolmaster to have committed a reasonable number of crimes.

In the matter of crime, boys are entirely lacking in that sense of proportion which it is the main object of all true education to impart. This essential lesson was put into nervous English by a friend and colleague of mine at Marlborough when reproving a boy for some trifling offence. "Of course the thing in itself" he said, "is a very small thing: it's the thing behind the thing which is really the thing, you know." The point could hardly have been stated with greater economy of language.

From one common schoolboy offence, that of



betting, I was saved by what some may regard as a divine interposition. When a small boy at Marlborough, I went in, rather against my conscience, for a small sweepstake on the Derby: I won the prize, and a half-sovereign was put into my hand: I dropped it at once, and no subsequent search revealed its whereabouts: I was tempted to regard it as a judgment, and gambled no more. I have since thought that there is something, after all, to be said for a paper currency.

I have said nothing about games. Of course we thought too much of them, as all English boys (and most of their parents) do: probably I thought more than most people, for I seem in retrospect to have been always trying to get some "colour" or other, not always with success. Like most cleverish boys I went through a period of disgust with a world which appreciated athletic prowess more than intelligence: I even went so far as to send some lines to the *Marlburian* which contained a bitter picture of a place

Where Weight precedence gives Worth seeks in vain,  
And heavy limbs can balance heavy brain.

They had to be sent anonymously, for most of my friends were athletes, and I spent some time in terror of detection: but I don't think they read the poetical parts of the paper, so that my fears were needless.

If I am to tell one athletic story it shall be one of which I am not the hero. I played cricket for Marlborough for two years, though in the first I had

the mortification of being twelfth man, and my one match at Lord's in 1891 was limited by rain to three-quarters of an hour on each day. But in 1890 we played a curious match against Cheltenham: they made a reasonable score: we were all out for 42. One bowler took 8 wickets for 6 runs, made in two hits by a future captain of Cambridge, the only member of our side to score off him. We followed on, and as I had made an unusual number of runs (it must have been nearly 10) I was sent in first. Imagine our amazement when the deadly bowler was not put on! He did not appear till we had made 40 (when he at once got me out): we made a big score and won the match, in spite of my missing a catch at the crucial moment.

Some thirty or forty years afterwards I found myself sitting at a City dinner next Sir Charles Harington, who told me he had been at Cheltenham and proved to be my contemporary. I asked him if he remembered the match, and the curious captaincy which resulted in our victory. His answer was, "I should think I do: I was the other bowler who was put on instead!" But I confess that this story has no moral, and I will spare my readers more of my athletic reminiscences.

Incidentally I may remark that school novels almost invariably suffer from the assumed necessity that the hero shall achieve distinguished success. The only brilliant exception is *The Bending of a Twig*, in which his solitary athletic achievement is, as

coxswain, to make a bump long after it had become inevitable. I remember also its final episode. The hero, a good captain of his house, was urged by his housemaster, just as he was leaving, to make up a long-standing quarrel with another leading boy. He pocketed his pride and asked his enemy to shake hands: the answer he got was entirely characteristic, "You always were an ass!" There is real genius in the picture.

School novels inevitably fail because the ordinary school life is so uneventful and the ordinary school conversation so dull. To make it exciting it is necessary grossly to exaggerate its profanity or indecency. Tolstoi, when he wishes to introduce a dull man, makes him talk till you can never forget the fact: but not even a Tolstoi would dare to reproduce the average conversation of two average boys. The author is driven to heroic episodes—unless, like Dr. Farrar in *Eric*, he has a command of style which enables him to describe the presentation of a watch to a deserving sailor as "the gift of a costly chronometer," and even of such writing there comes satiety at the last.

Similar results are still aimed at by modern writers. I have in my scrapbook a chapter from a school story published in *Chums* which is in the best tradition. Five brothers had arrived simultaneously as pupils at Thistledown Academy (presided over by Dr. Braemar), and a fragment of dialogue will show that the book is worthy of this startling beginning.

One of the five was accused of stealing the matron's money-box: Strickland, the head boy, takes a firm line: "Strickland took a step forward. 'There will be a prosecution,' he began protestingly. 'Silence!' thundered the doctor. 'How dare you attempt to usurp my position, sir?' Strickland fell back in dismay. 'I shall certainly write to my father!' he muttered, 'He will not allow me to stay!' Dr. Braemar rang for an assistant master. 'Strickland, leave my presence.' "

It must have been nice to be Head Master of Thistledown Academy.

The mention of Dr. Farrar, himself a Master of Marlborough, reminds me of a Marlburian anecdote concerning him. His memory was prodigious, and it was said that he declared that if *Paradise Lost* were unfortunately lost again he could reproduce it. I quoted this saying to a master who had served under him, and his comment was, "Yes, he had a marvellous memory: I have very often heard him quote *Paradise Lost*, but I have never heard him quote it right! "

But, as a great thinker has truly observed, all things come to an end, and in 1891 it was time for me to leave Marlborough. I will spare my readers any account of the last days spent there, and of the final walk round the Eleven and the Court, for either they will have walked round similar places for themselves in very similar circumstances, in which case words would be impertinent, or they have not, in

which case they would be useless. I will only recall that I looked out of the carriage window as long as the last glimpse of Marlborough was to be had, and that on the first occasion when I revisited the place I lay in bed and cried because I had no longer the right to obey the bell's summons to early school. Absurdly sentimental, of course, but is there any country but England in which that absurd sentiment prevails? and is not its prevalence something of an argument in favour of the institution?

## CHAPTER III

OXFORD is for me pre-eminently the place where I made a great many friends and encountered one great teacher. If it does not hold the place in my affections that is held by Marlborough or, for different reasons, by Shrewsbury and Eton, I am afraid that the reason is that I worked a great deal harder there than I had ever done at school. One may be—and I certainly am—profoundly grateful to the place where one learns to work, but the relationship is somewhat austere. It may be the competitive strain in me to which I have already regretfully alluded, but I prefer to think that, knowing that I wanted to be a schoolmaster, I wanted also to get a good degree, and had a well-grounded distrust in my ability to do so without working hard. It is possible that I missed a good deal in the process, but I have at least known ever since that if I had to get some work done I could make myself do it, and that is a comforting reassurance for a naturally idle person.

The making of friends from other schools forms a liberal part of a university education, and Trinity in my time was certainly a very friendly place. It was the right size for the purpose, large enough to afford a wide choice and not large enough to encourage too definite divisions. It was here that I

made my first acquaintance with Etonians, and I should like to moralize (nor perhaps for the last time) on the difference between them and the representatives of any other school.

All other schools are brought up to regard Etonians with suspicion, if not with dislike. They resent (not without some reason) the prominence given by newspapers to Etonian affairs—a prominence more marked forty years ago than it is to-day: they believe that all Etonians regard themselves as inherently superior and think of their rivals with contempt. I shared these prejudices to the full and was on the look out for any symptom of these distressing characteristics.

It was only by degrees that I discovered that, so far from thinking ill of other schools, no Etonian thinks of them at all: that, so far from meditating on Eton's superiority, he never gives it a thought. Whereas boys from elsewhere are continually, and rightly, anxious that other people should think well of their *alma mater*, no Etonian considers the subject for a moment. He is justifiably certain that no one will ever regard Eton with contempt, and feels himself absolved from any special effort to demonstrate its excellence: his attitude is not unlike that of the Englishman abroad, which might be extremely offensive if it were not for its entire lack of self-consciousness.

When this attitude is displayed by a young gentleman who has no other claims on public con-

sideration, it is deplorable in the extreme, and there is good reason for the belief that a bad Etonian is the most offensive type of undergraduate: but it is equally certain that it has very great attractions when displayed by a different and more common type. Most undergraduates feel their Etonian contemporaries to be more mature than themselves, less self-conscious, and more ready to take things and people at their proper value. I am sure that my experience is not uncommon when I say that, starting with a mind full of prejudice, I soon came to see that the better type of Etonian was definitely better educated than I, in the widest sense of the term, and that I count the Etonian friends whom I made at Oxford as among my chief debts to the University.

I cannot claim that we were specially distinguished in my particular year: the scholars of the year before had produced half a dozen firsts in Mods., and their predecessors again numbered three future Fellows in their ranks: but my own year was not eminent. We liked at Trinity to think (as Trinity and Wadham held their scholarship examinations together) that it was due to the errors of our examiners that F. E. Smith was allowed to go to Wadham in my year and John Simon to follow him there a year later: but the late Lord Chancellor used to maintain that he selected Wadham for its legal traditions, and I find it hard to believe that any board of examiners could have rejected the late Foreign Secretary: so perhaps they both preferred Wadham,



and it would be wrong for me to do more than indicate my disagreement. I confess that I have sometimes wondered whether if I had known "F.E." in the intimacy of the scholars' table my career might not have been a different one. As it was, my undergraduate acquaintance with him was limited to a note asking me to speak at the Union either for or against Mr. Gladstone's policy: I can't remember which side I was asked to take, but I know that it was the one which I did not at the moment espouse, and the Union lost its chance of listening to my eloquence.

To speak in public was one of the things which Trinity certainly taught. There were two or three Societies of which one was reasonably likely to become President or Secretary, and either office involved an obligation to open a debate on any subject which the writer of the paper might have selected. When one has frequently risen from a low wicker chair to address twenty of one's contemporaries, in the closest proximity, on Wagner or Buddhist Art or International Economics, no oratorical situation holds any terrors unexplored. It is not always realized that the larger the audience the easier is the speech.

I made this discovery—to anticipate a little—at Buffalo in the year 1897. I was called upon, in the capacity of Representative of the Laymen of England (perhaps the only representative that amorphous body has ever had) to address three thousand members of the Brotherhood of St. Andrew. I was not un-

naturally terrified: but it suddenly dawned on me that, as none of them had ever seen me before or would ever see me again, it really mattered extremely little what I said. I also realized that speaking in a large hall afforded ample time for thought. Buoyed up by these two reflections, and by observing that the man who spoke before me had made a speech so bad that I couldn't possibly do worse, I shed my nervousness, and have never been really terrified by such an occasion again. I should like to add, for the possible comfort of fellow-sufferers, that as a boy I was grotesquely shy of any sort of public utterance, suffered agonies when it was necessary to make one, and on at least one occasion invented an illness to avoid the necessity of appearing on a platform.

One of our Trinity societies was called the Church Society, and one of its meetings has for me a pleasant memory and suggests a possible moral. The subject for debate was Public School Services, and the first speaker maintained that the reason why he was not going to take Orders was that every sermon he had heard at school was devoted to urging such a course. He was followed by a speaker who maintained that during his career at Eton no sermon had ever dealt with the topic, and that that was one of the chief reasons why he had ceased to contemplate Ordination. The point of the story lies in the fact that both of them were ordained—one of them now adorns the Bench of Bishops—and that everyone who listened to them knew very well that no amount of exhorta-

tion, or of failure to exhort, on the part of any preacher would in the least have influenced their intentions.

There was towards the end of the last century a preacher who visited the public schools and took occasion several times in the course of his remarks to observe, "Human nature is human nature, and as long as human nature remains human nature, human nature will be human nature still." I think I heard the sermon twice: I know that I heard the sentence five times in one sermon, and it has never occurred to me to doubt its truth. The University gives a great opportunity for the contemplation of human nature, and for those who wish to study it in its lower forms there is no better position than that of secretary of a college cricket club. Even at this distance of time I look back with some horror on the perfidious promises, the last-minute evasions, the shameless unpunctuality of those whom it was my lot to shepherd to a dreary ground at Cowley. This generation, with its pleasant grounds close at hand, its motors and its pavilions, knows little of the sufferings of its predecessors, conveyed in a charabanc to a dismal outlying spot, and possibly marooned there in a derelict shed by a downpour beginning soon after the conveyance had disappeared.

On our way, we passed by the old Magdalen ground, where in old days the Varsity used to play its home games. I looked on it with some filial pride, for my father had played for Oxford in (I think)

1859. He was, when he died, the oldest cricket blue, and it is of some interest to recall that, being a very good field, he was given the position of longstop. As I am boasting of my cricketing ancestry I may perhaps be allowed to recall my godfather uncle, Clement Booth, who was, I believe, the first to hit out of the ground at Lord's in the Varsity match: his portrait appears in the great Cambridge XI of 1862 which is honoured by a place in the pavilion at Lord's, and he was usually to be found during the match sitting somewhere near the scene of his exploit. Another episode of his cricketing career gives me greater pleasure: in some big match he caught a sensational catch near the boundary: on returning to his place, he was gratified to hear one spectator say to another, "Catch it? Of course 'e caught it: 'e couldn't miss it: 'e's got 'ands like a 'ip bath!"

From these frivolous reminiscences I return to the business of the schools: Classical Moderations did not do very much to encourage wide reading, and the "class conscious" like myself stuck rather closely to the prescribed texts: it was not until one began to read for Greats that one's Oxford education really began.

I shall always maintain that the old school of *Literæ Humaniores* provided the best education which a university can give, whether from the point of view of History or of Philosophy. The history which we had to study was that of two short periods in the life of Greece and Rome: it was possible to

know pretty thoroughly all the authorities, and archæology had not yet forced its disturbing way into the text-books. If you knew what Herodotus, Thucydides and Cicero said you were reasonably secure, and what they said was by no means beyond human capacity to master. I cannot say that we received much assistance from our instructors: the history tutor remorselessly compelled us to copy down his views, which were neither original nor inspiring. A pupil of his, later to become an educational expert of eminence, described his methods in a parody of Killaloe (a song then very popular):

Then every other day an encyclopædia

Taught us history in patches and in shreds,  
Tabulated Plutarch's lies, and, to our extreme surprise,

Went and cut up C. J. Cæsar into heads:  
There's an awful row in Crete: and the Spartans have  
no fleet,

And we slumber till at last we hear him say,  
"Parenthesis ends here: we will go on to Euboea:  
I'm afraid that we must leave off there to-day."

In the visions of the night, still we hear with dim delight

How the Teutons have improved Thucydides,  
And how the Democrats joined the cult of Coptic Cats—  
"We will look that up together if you please.

Make a system: take good notes: read your Mommsens  
and your Grotes,

And mark my printed words and hold them fast:  
Always read with pen in hand: underline and under-  
stand:

And you're safe to get a Second at the last! "

I should add that there was one tutor at Trinity  
by whom I was only briefly taught, Sir Henry Stuart

Jones, recently Principal of the University College of Wales, who had the amazing power of describing the social and political life of ancient Greece or Rome as if he had himself been present. It was a liberal education to see him dive into some well-thumbed edition of an author whose name one had never heard, and produce the evidence as to, let us say, the precise method of voting at a Roman election.

It was he who told me of the test propounded for a man's fitness to read Greats, derived from the German card game of Skat. The qualification was to understand a rule of that game which, as I remember it, runs as follows: "You score your score in the ordinary way, and then once again for every trump in head sequence which you have or have not got." I must once have understood it, for I certainly read Greats, but as certainly I do not understand it now.

But it was from Charles Cannan that my contemporaries and I received our real education. He was a really great teacher, and though I was never a good enough philosopher to profit by his profound knowledge of Aristotle, I at any rate learnt how little I knew in any real sense of the word. I well remember my first introduction to him as a tutor, when, in a virtuous mood, I asked what I had better read in the vacation after my Mods. examination. He only said, "Read something you can't understand." I obeyed him by ploughing through Martineau's *Types of Ethical Theory*, and I still possess the notes I then made on Idiopsychological and Heteropsychological

logical Ethics. The book certainly fulfilled his condition, and began the invaluable process of convincing a rather self-satisfied young man of his intellectual limitations.

It has always seemed to me that that was in my day the great difference between the classical education offered at Oxford and Cambridge. At the latter institution (which I mention with all respect) I believe that in those days all that happened was that you did progressively harder and harder unseens and harder and harder pieces of composition. This process no doubt turned you into a very fine and accurate scholar, but there was nothing in it to frighten you. The result seemed to me to be that my Cambridge contemporaries left their university fundamentally unchanged, whereas no one who had read Greats with any intelligence could avoid having his outlook on life radically altered.

I say this with the more confidence because, as I have said, I was no philosopher. When I attended Caird's lectures I was misled by his Scottish accent into mistaking his reference to the synthetic unity of apperception into "our perception," and the mistake was typical of a low type of philosophic mind. I understood very little of what Professor Cook Wilson tried to teach us: I never read the *Timæus* as he encouraged us to do, and I was able in my *viva* to answer the only question put to me by the Master of Balliol, "Have you read the *De Anima*?" with an unhesitating negative.

But in spite of these defects I emerged from Greats, under Cannan's guidance, with a mind infinitely more serviceable and very much more humble than that which I brought to it, and there are few examinations which can claim to do more for a pupil.

It used to be said that the study of Greats tended to weaken the religious sense, and that pious boys suffered loss thereby. My experience was diametrically opposite. I was not a pious boy, though I had certainly never competed for the post of School Atheist, which was in my day one of the roads to notoriety at Marlborough. But it was only when I read Greats that I began to feel any keen intellectual interest in religion. Mr. Pollock, the devout disciple of Westcott, had imbued us with some of his enthusiasm, and when I found that T. H. Green, proceeding along a very different road, had reached conclusions not unlike those which Westcott reached by an intensive study of the tenses of the New Testament, I first began to feel intellectually that there must be "something in it." I do not wish to exaggerate my previous lack of concern: like perhaps the majority of boys, I was really orthodox but not very deeply interested: my point is that the educational process which is usually supposed to inculcate "doubts" did in fact stimulate faith.

With this particular process Cannan had little directly to do, but he had the supreme gift of the teacher who can induce his pupils to think, and he certainly did not encourage us with facile praise.



One essay on which I had rather prided myself was compared by him to a sheep's head as containing "fine confused feeding," and I and others were frequently told to run away and play while he discussed Platonic mathematics with a Scottish Rugby Blue, who, though very ignorant of the classics, was alone thought worthy to discuss such high themes. He never simulated omniscience: "Write me something about Hegel and I'll see if I can understand it" was a typical injunction, but I have never met anyone more successful in stimulating thought. He was much interested in practical affairs, and his direction of the Clarendon Press was later to prove his commercial ability.

In that capacity he had to supervise the production of the *Oxford Book of English Verse*, and used to tell with glee a story of his dealings with his old pupil, the editor. He had been instructed to insert if possible some poems of American authorship, and had submitted some by Longfellow. "So I sent for the old fellow, and I said, 'Couch,' I said, 'with regard to those passages of Mr. Longfellow which you have marked for inclusion, it appears to have escaped your notice—it appears, I say, to have escaped your notice that they are unfortunately couched in prose!'" So the editor had to try again.

We did not learn much political economy, and in view of recent developments I am very glad that no economic doctrines were instilled into us as gospel at an impressionable age: it seems to me a very

dangerous subject for the young, who are likely to enlist under a banner which will wear out before they are grown up. Strictures upon John Stuart Mill, whom Cannan alleged, I do not know with what truth, to have written his political economy on the top of a bus, remain in my mind: and I remember that some expressed leanings towards socialism, fortified by the success of the Post Office as an institution, were checked by the reminder that the privately owned newspaper not only delivered itself for a penny on your breakfast table, but also wrote you an exceedingly long and well-informed letter without any extra charge. Cannan was full of prejudices: one was in favour of Rugby football (he had played in Vassall's famous Oxford XV): it took him some weeks to forgive me for a lamentable display in the Freshmen's Match. Another was against Cambridge, for whose methods he humorously professed an extreme contempt: "at Cambridge they ask you to compare what Hume said in the *Treatise* with what Hume said in the *Principles*: now that is very disturbing to an Oxford man to whom Hume is Hume!"

I am tempted to ramble on, and to repeat some of his countless anecdotes about Bywater, his friendly enemy, or his old pupils, of whom Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch was the favourite, but they would lose half their value without his intonation and the slight lisp with which he told them. I only wish to put on record that the two years which I spent as his pupil

did more for my education than any other period, and that I owe to him a debt which it is hard to over-estimate.

“Greats” certainly taught one to think, and to express one’s thoughts. No doubt it is possible that it left one too ready to see both sides of a question, and inclined to become a specialist in generalizations: but I feel no doubt of its supreme value. It used to be said, some years ago, that science was the best training for the mind: I can only say that I have very seldom known a science master who could be safely trusted with any particular job. If as Head Master I wanted some piece of work done, I should feel safer if I entrusted it to a mathematician or to an Oxford classic: fairly safe if my classic came from Cambridge: but profoundly uneasy if I had to give it to a scientist. No doubt there are brilliant exceptions, just as there may be women with artistic gifts, or men with feminine practicality, but roughly speaking I believe this (typically Oxonian) generalization to be true. I remember that at Eton the science staff was once invited to draw up suggestions as to the method of their payment: they began by a unanimous resolution that they should all be paid on the same principle, and then passed a series of resolutions to ensure that all seven of them were paid differently. No doubt it is possible to have a rule entirely composed of exceptions, but it does not make for simplicity of working.

I cannot leave Oxford without a word about

Robinson Ellis, a great scholar who adorned Trinity in my time. Oxford seems to me to be infinitely less reverent in its attitude towards its great men than the sister University. At Cambridge I have been shown with becoming reverence the rooms where, let us say, the great Professor Mayor did his work on *Juvenal*, and worked out those theories of vegetarianism which did so much to popularize the Brazilian nut and are said to have been fatal to his housemaids. At Oxford our great men were always regarded as slightly ridiculous: it was Jowett's peculiarities rather than his greatness on which we fixed our irreverent gaze, and it was Ellis's boots and his absurdities of diction, and not his knowledge of Catullus, which impressed us most. He certainly was one of the absurdest of men, combining a child-like simplicity with an acid and rather salacious tongue. It is easier to illustrate the former characteristic: we who attended his lectures had been urged by him to buy some expensive reproductions of manuscripts: when we did not do so (after several threats that "he would not promise not to say a great deal about it") he finally declared, "I must really ask gentlemen to buy them: for if they do not buy them I shall have to pay for them, and it is *most* important that I should be put to *no* expense."

One of his peculiarities was that he had a Latin pronunciation of his own: and for the second time in my life (for Marlborough had its own idiosyncrasy) I had to train my ear to an unfamiliar tune. Latin

pronunciation is one of the few subjects in which I can claim to be an expert: I have been made to change my pronunciation no less than seven times, and I can truthfully say that no one of these methods has seemed better than another so far as the appreciation of the language is concerned.

And here I feel that I must give myself the pleasure of denouncing the absurd imposture, begotten of Pedantry on Pretence, which passes under the name of "the new pronunciation." If anything could shake my belief in the collective wisdom of Head Masters, it would be the fact that they first invented, and now perpetuate, this monstrous imposition. The only possible excuse is that a band of weary men, after a strenuous term, are unfit for consecutive thought.

The arguments by which it is supported are so fantastic as merely to require stating: the only one which is respectable is that it more closely resembles that used by the writers themselves. This is no doubt true, though the resemblance is probably not close enough to secure the comprehension of an ancient Roman. It is admitted that we are unlikely to have the chance of trying that experiment, and we are therefore told, in the second place, that we cannot hope rightly to appreciate an author unless we read him with the same vowel sounds which he used himself.

Here the argument passes from the realm of theory into that of fact, and the facts are utterly

against the reformers. In the days when Horace was commonly quoted in the House of Commons, or when Mr. Pitt made his famous Virgilian peroration, the pronunciation was as English as could be: Tennyson is commonly thought to have appreciated Virgil rather well, and I shudder to think of the language which he would have employed had he been told that he was incapacitated from doing so because he said Veenus when he ought to have been saying Wēnus, and did not pronounce civis as keewis.

And even this illustration fails to do justice to the point: there is no conceivable reason why the use of English vowel sounds should carry with it, or indeed encourage, any tendency to false quantities. The old scholars said Eego and Nīsi, but "egotism" and "visibility" are normal English words; when Dr. Warre returned to Eton as Provost he began his speech to the assembled school with the words "*Mōvet me, mōvet, Etonenses*"—but he did not do so because he forgot that "novel" and "hovel" are good English-sounding words—and much commoner than, for instance, "toves."

I have hardly the patience to pursue the fanatics into "the gloomy recesses of minds capacious of such things," wherein they maintain that there can be nothing to be said for a practice that is purely insular, and that the change will enable us to converse with foreign scholars in a common tongue. The "insularity" of our practice arises from the fact that most continental languages already give the

“reformed” value to their own vowel sounds: the French and the Germans do not pronounce Latin vowels as they do in order to imitate the ancient Roman, but because it is the natural way in which a French or German boy would talk. The English boy alone is bidden to discard his native idiom and to endeavour to say “Shibboleth” when all that is reasonable and all that is unreasonable in him conspire to make him say “Sibboleth.”

And for what purpose is this labour imposed? In order forsooth (this is such a good word that I am anxious to repeat it), in order forsooth that he may converse with foreign scholars at his ease! Make a brief list of those who have tried the experiment, strike out the eminent names of those whose efforts have resulted in failure, and you will be able rightly to gauge the mentality of those who have carried out the reform.

It is perfectly true that to the good linguist the trouble is not great: I will not pretend that even I found it very irksome: but it would be affectation to deny that most of those who learn Latin do not find it so easy to adapt themselves. The simple fact is that at a moment when every effort should be made to strengthen the position of Latin in the public mind, and to encourage a love for it among those who learn it, we have erected a perfectly gratuitous obstacle in the path. It is ridiculous to maintain that it is not both real and serious: no one who has examined small boys for years can doubt that the

effort to distinguish between *qui* and *quae* has become additionally severe: and those who have no experience have only to ask themselves whether it is not inevitably harder to give to vowels an unfamiliar sound.

Of course it is, and many of the sounds desired are such as to be repulsive to the English ear: even reformers shrink from the word *Eheu*, and boggle a little at *Kaisar*.

There are, I am credibly informed, some of the more logical sex who maintain that the reform must be extended to Greek, but girls' schools and ladies' colleges are outside my province: for all I know, they may insist on reading Homer "correctly," so that no trace remains of the glorious hexameter rhythm in which generations of scholars have delighted. "No doubt" said Tennyson's Princess, when defending her régime, "No doubt we seem a kind of monster to you," and I am afraid that in this respect I should be forced reluctantly to agree that they did.

It is characteristic of the female sex (as of the great American nation) to carry everything to extremes: Lady Macbeth suffered from none of the doubts and fears which paralysed her spouse. But even those who dare, in the face of much evidence, to maintain that our modern pronunciation resembles the tongue which Cicero spoke would find it hard to assert that an English girl's Greek would have helped her much more in ancient Athens than it does at the Piræus to-day.



America, that up-to-date and logical country, has followed us in both these absurd fashions, and that no doubt has something to do with the lamentable decline in all classical training which many of her best educationalists deplore.

But to return to the unfortunate boys: the only gleam of hope which I see for them in the situation is that the "reform" has not been universally accepted and that there are signs that it is becoming increasingly unpopular. Chaos is in danger of coming again: and (if I may repeat what I have said elsewhere) "while some of my readers no doubt will put the blame on those perverse Head Masters who have not loyally obeyed the behest of a majority of their colleagues, I personally attribute the present situation to the sound and healthy prejudice both of teachers and pupils against the needless and pedantic attempt to 'reform' them. It seems to me that it rests with my opponents to show either that the obstacle does not exist, or that there is some better reason than any which I have yet heard for its being placed in the path of those who are trying, under great difficulties, to maintain the classical tradition in England."

After all, no sane trainer of racing tortoises deliberately turns them on their backs before his instruction begins.

## CHAPTER IV

It was not till a year after I took my degree that I was elected at All Souls, but as that brought me back to Oxford for another year this is perhaps the right place for a few words about that unique and delightful institution. It is a commonplace that the reforms of one generation are the abuses of the next, and that is probably the case with the prize fellowships one of which I was fortunate enough to secure in 1897. But, abuse or not, it would ill become me to blaspheme against a system which brought me into that great society.<sup>1</sup>

I should be straying too far into the paths of autobiography were I to record the friendships which I owe to All Souls, but I cannot refrain from mentioning the Warden, Sir William Anson, who to all of my generation seemed the perfect embodiment of the College and its best traditions. Nor is it the least of my qualifications for the office which I now hold that I am perhaps the only person in the diocese of Durham who has seen its present Bishop ascend to the mantelpiece in Common Room and from that coign of vantage address the assembled Fellows with the greatest possible acceptance.

<sup>1</sup> The institution of "fellow Commoners" which had little theoretically in its favour and has deservedly perished, is recorded by Lord Balfour to have been of inestimable value to him when he was an undergraduate at Trinity, Cambridge.

During my year's residence at All Souls, having decided to take Orders, I was bidden to attend two courses of lectures by Divinity Professors, whose certificate of attendance was required. I do not know if this regulation is still in force, but, if so, I trust that its operation is more wisely controlled. The two courses which I attended were useless in the extreme. The great Dr. Sanday, one of the best of men, was unfortunately lecturing on the Valentinians: I confess that I felt inclined to say of them, as William IV is recorded to have said to a deputation which waited on him soon after his accession: "Gentlemen, if my pleasure at seeing you was equal to my entire ignorance of everything which concerns you, I should be very glad to see you indeed."

The other course of lectures, by the Regius Professor, was in the nature of a scandal. It appeared to us that the lecturer must be in the pay of some firm of second-hand booksellers, anxious to dispose of derelict stock, for the books recommended seemed, perhaps to our ignorance, to be long out of date. At any rate, the behaviour of those present was lamentable: I did not actually see anyone playing cards, but the writing of letters was common and inattention universal. At the end of the course, the Professor said that he wished to say a few words before we parted. I remember thinking, though I had no very flagrant sins with which to reproach myself, that we were going to receive a reprimand which was well deserved. In fact he told us that he never remem-

bered to have addressed so well-behaved an audience.

I was allowed occasionally to join in the sport of the Dons' Hockey Club, and was fortunate enough to escape without serious injury: my other chief recreation consisted in playing an inferior form of fives—I had not yet come to know that Eton Fives is the only form worth playing—with three eminent theologians, Professor Kirsopp Lake, the late Dean of Christ Church and the present Dean of York.

Life in All Souls was extremely pleasant. There were few permanent residents, chief among them being Henry Wakeman and Professor Edgeworth. From the former I learnt more High Anglican doctrine than I was able to assimilate, and from the latter the importance of never committing oneself to a definite statement, and of investing the slightest remark with a pontifical solemnity. I remember once meeting him at the Falls of Tivoli: I suggested going down to see them from below: his reply was, "I have considered the possibility: but I am unable to conceal from myself that the descent would inevitably be balanced, or in fact counterbalanced, by the corresponding ascent," or in other words, if one went down, one would have to climb up.

There was also the benign presence of Professor Goudy, perhaps the last man in Oxford to skate in a top hat, and Arthur Johnson, most beloved of chaplains, whose reading of the service was an education and his rare sermons a delight.

Among our occasional visitors was W. P. Ker, who embodied in himself as much as anyone could of the spirit of the college. I shall not presume to praise his genius or his erudition, but I may perhaps be allowed to quote a verse which (though he did not tell me so) I have always believed him to have written himself:

Had I met you, sweet poet Burns,  
Though water were our only drink,  
May God forgive me, but I think  
We should have laughed and quaffed by turns;  
And questioning, low whispering cares  
Had found no place in either pate,  
Until I asked you (rather late)  
"Is there a handrail to the stairs?"<sup>1</sup>

On great occasions of course there were large gatherings, and those who heard Trench render "The Wearin' of the Green," or "Who Fears to Speak of 98?", or the present Archbishop of Canterbury sing "Come back to us, Charlie, the king of us a'," were left wondering at the perennial mystery why the rebels have all the best tunes. I was privileged to take part in the ceremony performed every hundred years when the Fellows of the College with lighted tapers search for a Mallard on the roofs, and can well believe the legend that a drunken member of Brasenose, seeing the ceremony

<sup>1</sup> I have since learnt that these lines were in fact written by Landor, and that my version is not quite accurate. I owe a double apology to the shade of W.P.K.

<sup>2</sup> Not, as a newspaper extract made me suggest, the King of U.S.A.

from across the way, was driven to renounce liquor by so unexpected an apparition.

Over these high revels, and the normal and delightful amenities of the life of the College, presided the dignified and benignant figure of Warden Anson, his wise eyes blinking with inimitable politeness as he put the visitor or the young Fellow at his ease, but roused to instant indignation if anyone aired one of the heresies which he abominated, as, for instance, that Carlyle was a good writer or that any real change was desirable in his two loved colleges of Eton and All Souls.

In these few paragraphs I have brought together a few of the memories which the College has for me, extending, of course, over several years. I have said nothing of most of the great personalities to whom it introduced me, its viceroys, its editors of *The Times*, its politicians, its historians and its lawyers: but perhaps I have said enough to show what membership of such an intimate and unique society meant to an impressionable young man. I should like to borrow for All Souls the motto which, I believe, Sir Henry Wotton first adopted for Eton, and to say *Esto perpetua!*

The College may be, and indeed is, an anomaly, but I have heard President Lowell of Harvard toy with the possibility of creating a similar society on the banks of the Charles.

It was during my year as a probationer that I had the opportunity of developing a friendship to which

my debt is incalculable—with Bishop Gore, then a Canon of Westminster and an honorary Fellow of Trinity. I had made his acquaintance as an undergraduate, and my first recollections picture him reclining on the floor in my rooms in Trinity and declaiming with infinite gusto Clough's terrible lines:

How pleasant it is to have money, heigh ho!

How pleasant it is to have money.

I had stayed with him several times in Westminster, where he loved residing in the unfashionable month of August, and had profited not only by his piety and learning, but by his wonderful acquaintance with English literature and the geography of London. He was quite unable to believe that I did not know to whom all the great houses belonged, and it was a liberal education to walk the streets with him: we occasionally visited the Zoo, which, he used to say, tended to shatter his belief in a beneficent Creator.

It is not for me to attempt to draw a portrait of so great a man, but I cannot resist the temptation to recall a few of his characteristics. Canon Adderley had, I think, said of him that he combined the traditions of old Whig families with the philosophy of Balliol, and though he prided himself on having outgrown them both, the remark was profoundly true. He was much interested in his family, and used to delight in showing that tomb of Lord Arran in Westminster Abbey which presents in large capitals the startling line

HANG ALL THE LAW AND THE PROPHETS

When, some years later, I wrote a book, which incidentally mentioned that the Duke of Sussex, one of George III's sons, died unmarried, Gore took pleasure in saying, "Your statement is incorrect: the Duke of Sussex *was* married: he married my aunt: her name was the Lady Cecilia Buggin"—and a reference to the Peerage will prove that he was right.

Another characterization which always roused him to fury was one made by the present President of Trinity who said that he was certain to get on, because he was "eloquent and well connected." Both epithets were well deserved, but when I reminded him of them I never failed to receive the reply, delivered with many of those wriggles which delighted all his friends, "You are a perfect beast! I do think you are a perfect beast!"

In 1897 it happened that he, with Bishop Talbot, had been invited to attend the meeting of the Brotherhood of St. Andrew: he wanted a companion, and I had nothing to do: and the result was that I spent two delightful months with him in America in what I learnt to call the Fall of that year.

Gore was a good sailor and had all a good sailor's contempt for those less fortunate than himself: I like to think that he was responsible for the blasphemous parody of Clough's great lines:

It comforteth my soul to know  
That though I'm not sick some are so:  
I sounder sleep when I recall  
Some people cannot sleep at all!



As the annexed Class List will show, he had every opportunity of exercising his disdain :

Class I. Canon Gore.

Class III. Mrs. Talbot, Miss Lyttelton, Mr. Alington.

Class IV. Bishop Talbot.

I suppress the name of the member of the party who "satisfied the examiners."

As will be seen, the bond which first united me to the lady who was afterwards to become my wife was not a romantic one: she plays of necessity a small part in a work primarily educational, but I fancy that no one, either at Shrewsbury or at Eton, will be likely to underrate her influence either on my happiness or my efficiency. When, on a recent anniversary of our wedding day, I cabled to her from New York "Many thanks," I am proud to recall that she felt able to reply "The pleasure is mine."

Of that tour I have many other happy memories. To be with Gore introduced me to the highest walks of American society: I shook hands with President McKinley five times in twenty-four hours, though the glory of this achievement was somewhat dimmed by the fact that on the steps of the White House I was taken for a waiter by the Secretary of State. We visited Mount Vernon, most delightful of houses, in a tug provided by the Secretary for the Navy, and piloted by a captain with the longest side-whiskers I have ever seen. He said to us in meditative fashion, "I have been trying to figure out just why I was selected to have the honour of conducting this

expedition : I reckon it was because my poor first wife was an Episcopalian ! ”

The last word reminds me of another story which gave us much delight : it told of a Methodist who was induced to attend an Episcopalian service. He was a little doubtful as to how he would get on, being unfamiliar with the ritual : when he emerged his friends congratulated him on the propriety of his conduct ; his answer was, “ Waal, I can’t say I know much of them Piscalopians, but I jest took notice and riz and fell with the rest ! ”

There is one unforgettable day, the experiences of which I feel I must record at length. We were in Tennessee, the guests of a general who claimed (a nice American word) to be the only unpardoned rebel in the South : of his hospitality I remember little more than that my first experience of a mint julep raised me from the depths of indigestive depression to a reasoned hilarity. In the strength of that drink, we—or, I should say, I, for I think Canon Gore abstained—attended the Nashville Centennial Exposition. It was a great occasion, for the city had erected a life-size model of the Parthenon with a statue of Pallas Athene at one end and one of Commodore Vanderbilt at the other, and Mr. Chauncey Depew was to attend on behalf of the Vanderbilt family and unveil the latter. Pallas, I think, had been honoured by no such ceremonial.

It was also Brooklyn Day, which meant that a large company had travelled about a thousand miles from Brooklyn in special trains, and marched in pro-

cession to the Auditorium, where they were welcomed by Canon Gore and myself, and a sprinkling of the inhabitants of Nashville. They had brought with them the Brooklyn poetess, who opened the proceedings by reciting in a somewhat thin voice a poem in praise of her native city. But she was eclipsed by the Brooklyn orator, who delivered an oration on the same theme: one of his sentences stays in my memory. He had been lamenting the decline of population, and proceeded to contrast the conditions prevailing in Brooklyn with those in less fortunate localities. "Brooklyn," he said, "Brooklyn, ladies and gentlemen, contains homes whose fecundity is the despair of the enemies of posterity." The Brooklyn party soon afterwards marched out of the auditorium, and presumably returned to their special train: at any rate, we saw them no more, and settled down to the serious business of the day.

The auditorium began to fill with students from Vanderbilt University, anxious to listen to Mr. Depew: the Methodist minister invited Gore to open the proceedings with prayer, an invitation which he declined. Mr. Chauncey Depew, a very eloquent man, did full, and indeed remorseless, justice to his subject: he described in some detail the way in which the Commodore acquired his fortune, and made no attempt to conceal or to palliate the ruthlessness of his methods. "The Commodore, gentlemen, was not a man in whose way it was very safe to get: when he found a man in his way" (a pause and an impressive sweep of the hand) "he crushed him." It was

at this point that Gore leant over to me and said, "I am bound to say that I should not at all mind *concluding* this meeting with prayer: it seems to me that the prayer for St. Matthew's Day would be singularly appropriate!"

The proceedings ended, strangely enough, with cheers for Canon Gore of England and Mr. Alington of England, led by the University fogleman and given with a warmth which we had done nothing to deserve.

The mention of Mr. Chauncey Depew reminds me of another story current in the United States in the last century, and so perhaps old enough to have a certain novelty. He had been holding forth on the power of commerce to cement national friendship, and had touched on the other bonds which linked peoples in friendly association. His speech was long and eloquent, and was followed by one from Mr. Choate, a famous rival as a speaker. He began by saying that he had noticed one curious omission in Mr. Depew's oration: he had said nothing of the power of eloquence in promoting a good understanding between peoples of different outlook. "Holding these views, gentlemen, you will appreciate with what gratification I saw recently the formation of a company entitled The Depew Natural Gas Company Limited." When the laughter had died away, he turned to his neighbour and added, "But, Chauncey, why Limited?"

But I must return to Gore, who really provided the only excuse for this American digression. He

prided himself on being a good democrat, and was much uplifted to find himself described in an American paper as a "homely man": it was my painful duty to explain to him that in American usage the word is synonymous with ugly. Another paper made its meaning unmistakably clear: "Canon Gore of Westminster (Eng.) is tall, unhandsome, lean to gauntness." But in spite of these criticisms on his personal appearance, they heard him gladly, and he received many invitations to stop over and deliver one of his fine sermons at places sometimes described as "fine strategic positions from a missionary consideration."

They were perfectly right, for I think he was then quite at his best as a preacher, and I myself never tired of hearing him repeat some of his favourite aphorisms: "Everybody counts for one and nobody counts for more than one": "Each for himself and God for us all, as the elephant said when he danced among the chickens." Or of hearing him roll out the great passage from the *Faery Queene* about the ministry of angels, which begins:

And is there care in Heaven? and is there love  
In Heavenly spirits to us creatures base. . . .

I owe more to his friendship than I can say, and it was cemented by several other trips abroad, notably to Sicily, where I have a priceless picture of him very angry on a mule on the way to Segesta, and another of him being accused (with justice) of uttering false coin in Girgenti. It was in Rome that he remarked

while drinking chocolate and eating a chocolate biscuit, "This is the nearest approach to seething a kid in its mother's milk that I have ever encountered," and in Venice that we developed an elaborate joke based on the assumption that Minghetti, the name of a small cigar, was really the name of a little known but very popular religious painter: "It is extremely touching to see how many of the common people treasure a Minghetti: one often sees a small light burning before it—a sign of the reverence in which the works of the master are held." Abroad, he threw off all his cares and delighted unashamedly in a holiday. Bishop Creighton may have said, "I never go to France without feeling how stupid I am, I never go to Germany without feeling how ignorant I am, I never go to Italy without feeling how vulgar I am": Bishop Gore felt none of these things: he loved a holiday and he loved getting out of England: he took his meals with great gravity, and was disproportionately furious at all delay in serving them: "Quite intolerable" were words frequently on his lips, and he compensated himself for the patience he showed at home to unsatisfactory clergy by a quite unreasonable indignation at the unpunctuality of Italian trains. I never knew anyone enjoy a holiday more: we talked no more of theology or literature: his favourite limerick was the history of the old man of Tarentum who gnashed his false teeth till he bent 'em: I suppress the unedifying conclusion. I remember how we once got lost in the neighbourhood of Rome and composed rival

limericks on the natives who misdirected us. Both began:

The people of Rocca di Papa  
Have morals to shock a card-sharper.

I forget which of us was responsible for which conclusion, but both show some religious knowledge. One ran:

So filthy their mien  
They would scarcely get clean  
If they washed in Abana and Pharpar,

and the other, bearing more closely on our particular grievance:

The number of lies  
In their airy replies  
Would justify Israel's harper.

These are very frivolous reminiscences,<sup>1</sup> but I do not think that they will seem either irrelevant or irreverent to those who knew and loved him. I should like to put on record that I know no better argument for the Christian religion, or for the Church of England, than that its doctrines satisfied the heart and the head of a man like Charles Gore.

He had a very great influence upon me, and I can only wish that it had been greater. I sometimes dared to disagree with him, but I knew all the time that the presumption was very heavily in his favour. I could not understand the importance which he attached to ecclesiastical tradition, but he was as far as possible from being a Ritualist. When moved by the excesses of that party in the Church he was in

<sup>1</sup> It is perhaps worthy of record that once when in delirium he cried out continuously, as he averred to me, "If there is to be a resurrection, we must hold on to our toasting forks."

the habit of remarking, "I am increasingly convinced that the *Church Times* is now edited by the Devil in person": he would elaborate the idea by saying that other church papers were predominantly worldly and toy with the idea of having one which should be predominantly devoted to the interest of the Flesh. Once generally regarded (and denounced by Liddon) as a dangerous Liberal, he came of course to be regarded as a Conservative: no one would maintain that he was necessarily right in the precise point at which he called a halt in modernization, and it is quite possible that in his argument for Theism he put an excessive weight on the experience of the Hebrew prophets, but there can be few men who have done so much for the cause of religion in England by their writings, and by the testimony of a life so patently devoted to all things that are good.

I returned from America in time for All Souls' Day, 1897, and soon after that took leave for good of residence in Oxford. I cannot be sufficiently grateful to my old College for giving me once more an academic status. I like to think of her in the words written by Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch, who was elected to an Honorary Fellowship on the same day as myself,

TRINITY COLLEGE, OXFORD

A HOUSE OF LEARNING

ANCIENT, LIBERAL, HUMANE

AND MY MOST KINDLY NURSE



## CHAPTER V

### I

It was while I was sitting for an All Souls Fellowship in the autumn of 1895 that I received an invitation from the Master of Marlborough, to whom I had owed much in the past, to return there as Sixth Form master. My plans were very uncertain: Dr. Warre, to whom some of my Etonian friends had suggested my name as a possible master, had replied that his list was very full, but that he would add my name to it: it was not for some years afterwards that I discovered that, like a wise man, he kept no list at all.

The Marlborough invitation was a great surprise: I did not rate myself high as a scholar, and my recollections of Mr. Pollock added to my sense of unworthiness to fill the place which he had held. I consulted Cannan, whose reply has often been of use to me when similar questions have arisen, "Don't you take two responsibilities; if you make a mess of it and somebody has to be punished, it won't be you, it will be old Bell!"

On the strength of this advice I accepted the offer and prepared to go there in May. I had done well

enough at All Souls to make it worth while to try again, and I spent the spring term at Oxford reading history by myself. My chief recollection of this term is that I attended the lectures which Froude gave on Erasmus at his private house and had the pleasure of making his acquaintance. As I have already said, I owed much to his *Short Studies*, and was later on to get in some trouble with Gore on his account: "Froude was a wicked man, a wicked man," he used to say, unable to forgive the way in which he deserted and then blasphemed the Oxford Movement. Wicked or not, he was as attractive a person as he was an historian: it was only later on that I came to realize with what horror his appointment would have been regarded by his predecessor, Freeman, and was regarded by his successor, York Powell. Into these high disputes it is not for me to thrust my unlearned head: it was enough for me that he was one of the people who first made history interesting and wrote some of the most glorious English of his time—or indeed of any other. Freeman I never knew, though I heard him lecture at Marlborough when I was a boy, and heard him glory in the name of "pedant." His *Historical Sketches* taught me most of what I knew in early days of mediaeval history, and he no doubt deserved some of the credit which he generously gave to Bryce for making clear the unity of all historical study. I like to recall his saying that his name, Edward Augustus Freeman, dedicated him to his life's task, for one

of his Christian names was ancient and the other modern, while the principle of Liberty enshrined in his surname supplied the inevitable link between the two.

I do not think that I learnt very much during my Easter term in Oxford, and, pleasant as it was, I was very glad when the summer term arrived in which I was to take up my duties at Marlborough. I did so with considerable trepidation, but I look back on my brief period there as one of the happiest in my life. To feel that one is *doing* something for the first time, instead of being taught how to do it, is the most delightful of sensations, especially when the thing one is trying to do is undeniably worth the effort. No doubt there is some truth in Mr. Bernard Shaw's bitter epigram, "He who can does; he who cannot teaches": but then there is truth of a kind in all epigrams that survive, and there is not enough in this one to have made me ever regret my choice of a profession.

It has surprised me a good deal since the war to find that, contrary to all expectation, fewer of the best type of undergraduate seem to wish to adopt it: it may be, perhaps, that the prejudice against Eton to which I have already alluded made my particular task harder: I can only state as a fact that it was easier to get the best of young masters to Shrewsbury (where the salary in my early days was ridiculous) than to Eton in post-war days. I do not profess to understand it, for a schoolmaster's life, for anyone

who really likes boys, is one of the happiest conceivable: it may, of course, be bad for the character to enjoy so many "petty triumphs over infant wits," but I doubt if this is the reason why young men are shy of it. They may think, with reason, that it opens no path to wealth, but in Arthur Benson's words,

Youth is all about you: and about  
The elm trees tower and all the fields are green,

and, though the profession invites no sensational achievements, it is a pleasant thing, as he also observed,

To see the hawks we trained prolong their flights,  
And read their names in all the daily prints.

In any case, rightly or wrongly, I was then, and have been always, unfeignedly glad that I adopted the profession. In America, I am told, schoolmasters are apt to regard their work as a stepping stone to professorships at some college: I am as glad that we escape that temptation as I am that we are not encouraged to strive after the title "Doctor."

My particular job at Marlborough was as pleasant a one as well could be: the Lower Sixth Form was practically under my control, and there were times when I was allowed to instruct the more dignified Upper Sixth as well. An acute observer has remarked, "Any fool can teach a Sixth Form," to which another has acidly subjoined the comment, "And a

great many do": but these acerbities do not detract from the pleasantness of the task.

So much has been done by recent Masters of Marlborough to raise its standard of education that I find, among some Marlburians, a tendency to believe that in the dark days of the last century our educational level was very low indeed. For the credit of my pupils I feel bound to dispute that opinion: several of them view me with polite condescension from the episcopal benches in the Church Assembly: one I suspect of controlling my income tax: others administer Colonies: one grapples undismayed with the mysteries of high finance: one became a much-loved colleague at All Souls. I need not say that I claim no sort of credit for these achievements: I only mention them as suggesting what pleasant boys they were to teach.

Indeed Marlborough had, and has, a tradition which other schools may well envy: it was a wise as well as a kindly thought which caused its founders, nearly a hundred years ago, to associate it particularly with the sons of the clergy. It is perhaps as untrue to suggest that most of England's distinguished sons are children of the parsonage as it is to suggest that the parson's sons are usually children of the devil, but it is certain that such boys will have a reasonably cultured background, and certain that they will not have too much money. For very many Marlburians the getting of a scholarship was a *sine qua non* if they were to proceed to the University, and, however

little one may like scholarship examinations, it is a great advantage to have pupils who are desperately anxious to succeed.

It ought not to be necessary to point out that the diversity of conditions does much to impair the value of those tables of statistics with which some newspapers delight to prove that the older public schools are falling back in the race. If a boy from Winchester or Eton, Harrow or Charterhouse, can afford to go to his father's distinguished college without a scholarship it is natural and right that he should do so: it is all very well to say that he ought to work equally hard for the bare honour and glory, but the fact remains that few parents, and not all schoolmasters, would choose this noble path. It is from every point of view desirable that scholarships should go to those who need them most: the only pity is that the necessity is sometimes so great as to drive schools and their pupils into the paths of premature and excessive specialization.

At Marlborough we frankly did our best to win scholarships and did not know or greatly care at what college they were won: of course Balliol at Oxford and Trinity at Cambridge had a glamour of their own, but we rejoiced as unfeignedly at those smaller triumphs which landed a boy safely at some college of lesser fame; and that made life very easy for the teacher.

His lot was very much lightened in my case by the fact that the Sixth Form studies were close to my

own rooms: this made intercourse extremely easy and pleasant, and led to a relationship which, though it would be quite normal now, was not quite so common in the nineteenth century.

So far as the boys were concerned life was all that could be asked: if I cannot say the same of my colleagues, it was less their fault or mine than that of the system which forced us to have all our meals together. It may be all very well for a monastic brotherhood to feed in common: they are united by ties much closer than those which unite schoolmasters: and they may well be safeguarded by the blessed rule of silence. To go into early school and chapel and then to return to an ill-cooked breakfast eaten with comrades not of one's own choosing involved a strain on the temper not easily to be realized by those who have not tried it, and to dine at six-thirty on a summer evening in the same society had tortures of its own. I do not think we were quite as bad as the company depicted in *Mr. Perrin and Mr. Trail*, but tempers certainly wore uncommonly thin, and the strain was very real. I remember with amused regret how one of my contemporaries (now a distinguished Head Master) and I used to indemnify ourselves for having nothing much to eat at breakfast (and no chance of seeing the evening paper, which had been seized by those who shirked chapel) by making life burdensome to the senior master, who failed entirely to appreciate our sense of humour.

It was the life of Common Room, more than anything else, which made me ready to accept Dr. Warre's invitation to go to Eton in the summer of 1899. He had invited me once before in the summer of 1896, having a mistaken idea that I was qualified to inaugurate the teaching of history at Eton: I was then so full of enthusiasm for my new work that I felt that I could not leave it, and told Mr. Bell, through whom the invitation came, that I would not desert him. He said in answer that we would see how my form did in examination, and if the results were satisfactory would discuss the question of making my appointment a permanency. I could not help reflecting that if my pupils did ill, and I was incontinently dismissed, I might regret having refused a much more advantageous offer: but it cured me of attempting histrionics with my much-loved Master.

I had learnt much from him both as boy and master: perhaps it would be well if I had learnt more: I remember his characteristic comment, written at the end of a somewhat flamboyant essay on which I rather prided myself, "Shun prolix verbosity and penny-a-line superfluity!"

To leave Marlborough was a terrible wrench: I have always thought that few positions were more enviable than that of Master of Marlborough, and used to toy with the idea that it might some day be mine. The position was twice within my reach, but at moments when to accept it was impossible: on the



only occasion when I offered myself for election I was not among the selected candidates.

## 2

On my way from Marlborough to Eton I spent a term at Cuddesdon: a term is really too short a time in which to appreciate to the full the charm of the place and, much as I enjoyed my six or seven weeks there, I did not benefit as I should have done. It is a little difficult to go back into a disciplined life after one has managed one's own affairs, and perhaps a schoolmaster feels it harder than anyone else; I am afraid that Bishop Gore had a true eye for my weakness when he put in a prayer book which he gave me a misquotation from the Book of Ecclesiasticus, "The very true beginning of wisdom is the desire for discipline: and the care for discipline is love."

But in spite of my shortcomings, I did appreciate Cuddesdon, its lovely Norman church and the genuine goodness both of teachers and taught. Perhaps it was a little too large and too collegiate for my taste, and the collegiate side with its cricket and tennis matches seemed something of a parody of Oxford life. But I expect that was my fault. Its name brings back to me a painful reminiscence of my early priesthood. I was staying with a lady of High Church proclivities in Scotland who asked me to celebrate in her private chapel: she further asked me if I minded wearing vestments: I said certainly

not, if someone would show me how to put them on. I was duly arrayed, but when I entered the chapel I found the service book on what I regarded then (and still regard) as the "wrong" side of the altar. This confused me dreadfully, and it seemed to me that I must be intended to do everything in the reverse order to what I expected. The result was lamentable, for I am constitutionally incapable of doing things backwards and am very easily confused. I have a vague recollection of breaking every rule of position and incidentally of praying for Queen Victoria, then lately dead. All that Mrs. Romanes said when the service was over was, "I thought you said you had been at Cuddesdon?"

I was ordained deacon by Bishop Stubbs and retain a vivid recollection of his spiritual power, unexpected by those who thought of him as a humorist and an historian. But then there are many people who only think of him as a constitutionalist, and have never realized the gifts of incisive eloquence shown, let us say, in his Introductions to the Rolls series.<sup>1</sup>

One absurd memory of my ordination stays in my

<sup>1</sup> I like to remember some lines which he addressed to the Dean of Christ Church, who had inadvertently asked him to reply for the Visitors at a Gaudy:

The Censor and Dean must go to the Queen  
If they would their Visitor see,  
But I'm the old man of the See, dear Strong,  
You cannot eliminate me.  
I'm W. Oxon, C.G., D.D.:  
However you treat me, you cannot unseat me,  
For I'm the old man of the See!

mind. We were bidden to wear black stoles, and one of my brother candidates confided in me that the prospect filled him with abhorrence. He was a ritualist of a somewhat pronounced type, and such comfort as I could offer was of little avail: a few moments afterwards I observed him kissing his black and cross-less stole in a corner of the Chapter House with every symptom of aversion.

When, two years afterwards, I was to be ordained priest I received a notice bidding me to bring a *Si Quis* and a testimonial signed by four beneficed clergy in the Diocese. I could only reply, "Have no *Si Quis*—do not know four beneficed clergy: coming self next train." Luckily, Bishop Paget, who had succeeded Bishop Stubbs, felt himself able to overlook the irregularity.

I was always rather surprised both at Eton and at Shrewsbury to find how little effort was made to induce clerical schoolmasters to take any active part in diocesan affairs. The explanation came to me late in life. I narrowly escaped at Durham being made to contribute heavily to a pension scheme based on length of clerical service from which, so far as I could see, I could derive no benefit till I reached the age of a hundred and two: this is due to the fact that the service of clerical schoolmasters, like that of missionaries, is not regarded as real—at any rate, not real enough to qualify for pension.

I served for some time as examining chaplain to the Bishop of Lichfield, but his chaplains were such

distinguished theologians that it was necessary to divide them into "chaplains" and "working chaplains," on the analogy of "lady matrons" and "working matrons." As the only "working chaplain" I used generally to be set to examine in Parochialia. On one of the rare occasions when I had a more distinguished task I remember setting what I think is the ideal question: "Produce any evidence in the time available to show that you have read the book set": unfortunately it is one which cannot often be repeated.

## CHAPTER VI

### I

I ARRIVED at Eton a day or two late for the Michaelmas Half of 1899. It was a curious experience for one who felt very strange in clerical attire to find himself inevitably regarded as having been practically born in a dog collar: naturally no one could know how strong the temptation had been to remain what is technically called a "good layman." It is a very plausible argument that boys regard all clergymen as professional, and pay much more attention to any religious exhortations given by amateurs: it is very plausible, but I think very false: a parson whose sincerity is questionable will do little good, but it is at least doubtful whether he could have achieved any more in a lay capacity, and, to take only two low points of view, the parson has infinitely greater opportunities and is compelled to make some effort to use them. I have too much reason to be grateful for the religious work done by lay colleagues to disparage their ministrations: I only regret that more of them do not take the step which both their creed and their character seem to me to demand.

It is a very serious thing for public schools that there is a definite clerical shortage. I have always felt it wrong to try to attract into school life men

who would have made admirable schoolmasters but felt a definite call to parish work: the only solution would seem to be that it should be definitely realized by all concerned, whether bishops or laymen of goodwill, that the vocation of a clerical schoolmaster is quite different from, and not necessarily inferior to, that of a parish priest: so long as the best men feel that if they do not minister to a parish they are not really fulfilling their Ordination vows, so long will the shortage continue and the schools lose much that they can ill afford. I have always been encouraged by a saying of Bishop Westcott, reported to me by Mr. Pollock in my youth: "My heart is with the schoolmaster: his is the really pastoral work."

It is true that laymen can preach, and that some affect to prefer their ministrations. I am far from suggesting that they do so in the spirit in which Dr. Johnson went to hear the lady speak (Sir, we listen to a woman speaking as we go to see a dog dancing: it is not that it is done well, but it is surprising that it is done at all): but I think, as I have already said, that the element of novelty has something to do with it. The laymen whom I have listened to give me the impression of being short of practice, as indeed they usually are: and too little practice is perhaps as dangerous as too much performance.

In case these remarks of mine seem to savour of clerical pride, let me add that in my opinion far too many clergy are called upon to preach, and to preach

far too many sermons. I wish they would believe it consistent with their duty sometimes to expound the Bible and to explain the service, rather than continually to exhort: further, I believe both that many laymen preach admirably now, and that many more would do so, to the great benefit of congregations generally, if they got the practice which I desiderate for them.

The subject of clerical Head Masters is one which I naturally approach with some diffidence. It is as obvious that there is loss when a Head Master cannot personally direct the religious life of the school as it is that it would be lamentable to choose him if he had no other qualifications. The trouble is that the laity show a diffidence in controlling school services which is as creditable to their character as it may be disastrous to their charges, for the result may well be that the services are directed by clergy who are "inferior" not only in the sense which the law attaches to the word. In saying this I hope I need not make it clear that I am merely stating an obvious general risk and not thinking of any particular school, least of all of those three with which I have been intimately connected. The appointment of a school chaplain may meet the case, but the ideal school chaplain is perhaps as hard to find as the ideal Head Master.

When I was being interviewed by the Fellows of Eton with a view to my possible appointment, my brother-in-law, Lord Cobham, asked me whether in

my opinion it was important that a Head Master should be in Orders. As I knew that I was the only candidate in that condition, I appreciated the kindness of his motive in putting that (his only) question: it was not from purely selfish reasons that I answered in the affirmative.

But such questions and answers seemed very remote from the young master suddenly confronted with five-and-twenty small boys in Upper School at Eton on Monday morning: fortunately, perhaps, most of them were new boys and as much at sea as I was myself: but there was at the top of the Division a sediment of boys who had failed in Trials the half before. I use the word "sediment" advisedly because by the Eton system a boy who had failed was automatically at the head of the class to which he had descended. As Divisions were then made up by cutting the school list into lengths, the result inevitably was that the stupidest and the cleverest, the idlest and the hardest workers, were in the same class. When attempts were made to induce Dr. Warre to alter this arrangement he was wont to reply that light was useless without shade—a metaphor which sent reformers away unsatisfied. In the years that I served under him at Eton that great Head Master was in the position of conserving his own reforms, and the younger members of the staff thought him Tory: it was only in later years that I came to realize how completely he had recast the educational life of Eton and made it into a working machine.



I soon found out that to teach fourth-formers at Eton was a far harder task than teaching a sixth form at Marlborough: young Marlburians tended in my day to be shy, and to regard a stranger with some alarm: no such sentiment animated the young ruffians among whom my lot was cast. Upper School was a place as unfavourable as possible for discipline: the room was very large, the desks very old and the forms very shaky. A boy told to stand on one invariably fell off and usually upset much ink in doing so. I had never had any disciplinary trouble before and was for a time completely helpless. When in later years I used to occupy the Head Master's room next door, I chuckled as I remembered how Dr. Warre had once said to me, in the kindest of manners, that he thought he would have to move his Division elsewhere if mine on the other side of the door persisted in making such a din.

But it was very good practice, and I have always felt that there was much to be said for the Eton custom of making the youngest master begin at the bottom: it was an illustration of the axiom *juniores ad labores* which Dr. Warre habitually quoted when assigning to his young masters some peculiarly loathsome task.

Some, no doubt, will see in this confession of mine a strong argument for a course of "pedagogy": why should parents pay to have their sons instructed by a master quite incapable of maintaining order? I do not wish to argue the general question whether teach-

ing can be taught, though I own myself a conservative heretic: there still ring in my ears the mocking tones of Edward Austen Leigh, best beloved of all Lower Masters, as he chuckled, "Who, pray, is Pestalozzi?": but I am very doubtful whether any course of training would have prepared a man to grapple with a Lower boy division at Eton, and there is a great deal to be said for learning by painful experience; nor do I think that my small charges suffered much in the long run.

There was less to be said in favour of making me teach them French: I was never an expert in the eternal wrangle as to which is a disjunctive and which a conjunctive pronoun: but I soon discovered that the threat of French dictation will bring any division to order. To read French in a low tone and a bad accent, refusing to allow any questions, is not perhaps an ideal way of teaching that great tongue, but it is a marvellous disciplinary instrument. I hasten to add that I did not employ it very often.

The work of Lower boys was then controlled by Austen Leigh, whom I have just mentioned, and it is impossible to convey to those who did not know him the affection inspired by his amazing kindness of heart, his impish humour, his contradictiousness and his incapacity for owning himself in the wrong. One or two illustrations are all that I can allow myself. When he left Eton, he refused to accept any presents (except one from the chaplains in Lower Chapel): he gave a window to the Lower Chapel: he gave a

dinner to all his friends at which he made the only speech, and in it he insulted them all by name. I had had to leave the party to take prayers in College, and returned to find the company rocking with laughter at his description of my failings as a racket player: "I had always imagined that rackets was a game of skill: but the other day I chanced to enter the court when Mr. Alington was playing. . . ." It is well known how on one occasion at Lord's he missed the fall of a wicket: returning to his seat, he asked how the man was out: "He was bowled," said his informant: Edward Leigh paused for a moment, with his head slightly on one side, and then said, "Perhaps." It is equally on record that to the end of his days he refused to believe that a cricket ball could swerve.

In proof of his contradictiousness I have only one instance to allege. I was a chaplain in Lower Chapel, succeeding or assisting such musical experts as Stuart Donaldson, Lionel Ford and Henry Bowlby. My inability to take a note gave the organist infinite trouble: I believe that Dr. Sydney Nicholson attributes much of his musical skill to the practice I gave him in reconciling the incompatible. The Lower Master took occasion to remark to me that he far preferred my rendering of the service. But those who came to Lower Chapel in those days came not to hear me sing, but to hear him read: when the story of the healing of the blind man was due there was a large attendance of masters anxious to hear

him throw himself with inimitable gusto into the varied rôles of that inimitable narrative.

It must be admitted that Lower Chapel in his day was not so beautiful, so musical, or so religious a place as it has been made by the piety of a later generation and the care of his successors. But his chaplains, whom I was in due course to join, were a notable body. Stuart Donaldson, their leader, was one of the best and bravest and simplest of men. On one occasion when he was preaching in Lower Chapel from the front of the altar steps—for there was no pulpit—he was observed to be kicking violently with one leg: as the door was open, the congregation sympathetically assumed that he had been stung by a wasp: it was discovered later that his knee had gone out and that he had kicked it in, while continuing to preach *fortissimo* on one leg.

But his courage was not only, nor mainly, physical: on another occasion while preaching in Windsor he observed that the solo part of the anthem was apparently not being rendered: he took it himself without hesitation, but was distressed afterwards to learn that the appointed soloist had in fact been doing his best all the time. He was ready to lecture on behalf of all deserving causes: one lecture of his on the persecutions of the early Church lives in my memory because of Arthur Benson's description of the first slide: "You know what a *macédoine* of fruit is like? Well, I can only describe this slide by saying that it seemed to represent a *macédoine* of

animals: in the front was a stout man, apparently a clergyman—in an attitude of prayer.”

Of such heroic stuff were Austen Leigh's chaplains made, but they were not encouraged to take liberties with the service: it was left to a chaplain of a later generation to compose a war prayer of such potency that (according to Hugh Macnaghten) at its first recital a Lower boy had a fit, and one other boy retired in a fainting condition, while two boys were sick when it was used a second time.

Austen Leigh ruled the Lower boys with wisdom and skill, but he was not a modern educator, and our methods were not always of a kind very appropriate to our young pupils. He was fond of setting very difficult Greek grammar papers to the Fourth Form: in one of them appeared the rare word *ἐάλωθι* which can only mean, in the imperative, “Have thou been taken prisoner!” I once remarked to Ronnie Knox, then a small Collegier, that situations must be rare which called for the use of the word: without a moment's hesitation, he replied, “I think it would do rather well for ‘Consider yourself under arrest,’ said the Red Queen.”

He would poke his head into a Division room and announce that the geography for the half would be Asia, returning in a moment to add cryptically, “Non-monsoon,” and to disappear as suddenly as he came, leaving us to try to interpret his Delphic utterance. Everybody loved him, but when, as frequently happened, the Head Master, hard pressed by

the demands for some reform, used to announce that he had appointed the Lower Master—with Mr. Mitchell—to look into the matter, we did not usually expect any great changes to be recommended.

I was from the first extremely fortunate in my surroundings at Eton: I lived with my dear friend, Lionel Ford, who had just succeeded to a small boys' house, and from the first I was welcomed with the utmost kindness by my senior colleagues.

I do not think that it is only the mist of time which makes me see them as a very remarkable company: Ainger whose taste, so impeccable in Latin verse, sometimes betrayed him into doggerel in English:<sup>1</sup> Broadbent, commonly believed to know the right answer to every question, and Tatham who could always guess it: Macnaghten with much in him of the poet and still more of the saint. These, and others whom I have mentioned, were honoured in their generation and a glory in their days. To dine with Arthur Benson was to be reminded that a schoolmaster need never cease to be both a scholar and a gentleman: and if I did not learn Plato with Henry Broadbent at least I played fives with him, and was stimulated by the unstinted praise and the

<sup>1</sup> When the war began he was anxious that the troops should sing songs worthy of their cause, and suggested a version of "Here's to the maid of bashful fifteen" containing the line

Lord Kitchener breezy and balmy.

He was distressed to hear that they preferred to sing

Take my father and my mother and my little baby brother  
But for goodness sake don't take me!

unsparing criticism which all who knew him will remember with affectionate gratitude.

But I was not at first at all happy. No doubt this was in large measure due to the rebellion of my foolish pride. At Marlborough I had been something of a figure: my work brought me into touch with the senior boys, and of course I knew and loved the place. At Eton I was naturally extremely unimportant and completely unknown—and I had not nearly enough work to keep me occupied. I had no pupils for several halves, and the work of a fourth form Division took very little time: I remember that I read all Stevenson in my first half. This will seem strange to those who are unfamiliar with the Eton system, and that system seems to me so admirable that I must devote a few paragraphs to its praise.

Every boy at Eton has a classical tutor when he comes to the school: he may stay with him throughout his career, or may later on forsake him for a tutor who deals with other subjects: but in any case much of his work is done with, or for, a master other than the man who teaches him in school. The school hours are necessarily shorter, and the Division master's position correspondingly less important: but the advantages of the plan, especially in a school of the size of Eton, are very obvious.

In the first place there is always somebody who is in touch with the boy's work throughout his school career, and he is not left to the mercy of a series of instructors whose methods may vary and whose

interest in a transitory pupil is necessarily somewhat slight. The housemaster at other schools is certainly a permanent fact, but he may know nothing of any given boy's particular subject, and in any case has no direct contact with it except by accident or grace. At Eton the housemaster and the tutor may be identical and probably are, if the housemaster is a classic: if not, there are two people to take a permanent interest, and if they work well together, as they usually do, for the one is chosen by the other, the old adage *σύν τε δὴ ἐρχομένῳ* has peculiar force. I can hardly imagine a better system theoretically than that a boy's character and his progress should be continually discussed between two men of good will approaching it from different angles.

Again, so far as theory is concerned, it is surely clear that some subjects are better dealt with in a class and some by private tuition. The Eton system affords this possibility: it has not been elaborated as fully as it deserves, and there is far too much duplication, but, though I myself never succeeded in solving the problem, nor I fear in making any real contribution to it, I feel in my bones that the system has very great possibilities, and that a wiser educationalist than I will yet develop them to the full. At present, the system bears the marks of its historic origin, by which private tutors prepared their boys for the ordeal of facing a Division master, but Eton has, by accident, stumbled on a system which may well produce great results in the future.



In any case, the pupil-room system provides for a closeness of intercourse and a permanency of relationship between boy and master which does not, so far as I know, exist elsewhere. Eton may, or may not, be "the best of schools," but there is no school where it is so easy for a boy and a master to know one another well. What is elsewhere the fortunate possession of a few is at Eton the inheritance of all. It cannot be said of all boys (or of all masters) that "to know him is to love him," but the system which provides for most knowledge is indubitably the best.

## 2

My early days at Eton coincided with the closing years of Dr. Warre's great Head-Mastership. I have already hinted that he was, not unnaturally, averse from change in those days, and that petitions for reform were often handed over to a committee of the most senior members, who could be trusted to report on them without undue favour. But there were other committees which were appointed to consider possible improvements in the teaching, and I have appointed too many myself not to sympathize with a Head Master who thus delegates his responsibilities.

I sat on two, and their procedure was so characteristic of Eton at that time that I cannot refrain from a brief record of their proceedings. The first was on the teaching of Latin prose, presided over by that

great scholar, Frank Rawlins. He circulated a paper of questions which we were bidden to answer, and at our first meeting announced that by what he could only describe as an amazing coincidence two of the sets of answers were almost identical: he suggested that we could not do better than treat this miraculously agreed solution as a basis for our discussion. I ought, I know, to have said that I could explain the miracle: I had forgotten to fill up my paper, and had at the last moment applied to a more virtuous colleague, whose answers I am afraid I cribbed, introducing a few characteristic errors. But I let the moment for confession pass, and, for all I know, the teaching of Latin prose at Eton is still based on this discreditable foundation.

The proceedings of the other committee, on the teaching of history, were equally characteristic. Arthur Benson was the chairman, and Henry Marten, the present Vice-Provost, and I its other members. No meetings were held, till Benson invited us to dinner: after an excellent meal he read us a draft of his proposed report, which under the soothing influence of his hospitality we accepted without demur.

I also sat, for no reason that I can imagine, on a committee to decide what it was best to give boys for supper. My only recollection is that we agreed that as cheese took so long to digest it could reasonably be eaten at any time, in the hope that the mysterious powers which preside over such things would arrange

for its digestion, if not in the night following, on some equally appropriate occasion.

To be asked to preach in College Chapel was for a young master an alarming compliment. In days not very remote this had been a monopoly of the Fellows, and when young Mr. Warre was invited to mount the pulpit it was a startling innovation. Those days were over: indeed it was thought that there was something of a competition between the Provost and Head Master to encourage local talent, as it saved them from having to entertain a preacher from outside. So the compliment was not, perhaps, so great as might have been thought, but the alarm remained. Eton Chapel is a very large building and the fact that much of the congregation is behind one's back is as embarrassing as the presence of a number of presumably critical colleagues. In those days it was still filled with the meaningless Victorian stalls, now happily housed at Lancing: the glories of the woodwork which they displaced can be realized by anyone who visits the Victoria and Albert Museum. The glass at the East End had not yet been doctored into decency by Mr. Luxmoore, and the rest of the windows shone, as they shine to-day, as a glaring instance of mistaken munificence: there was a moment of hope after the war that they might be replaced by something more worthy of their surroundings, but the chance was lost.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A cynical friend to whom I have shown this paragraph maintains that the windows have their merits. It is not gener-

I learnt a very great deal during my nine years' apprenticeship at Eton, and I think it is not only prejudice which makes me believe that the training there given is superior, for a future Head Master, than that which he would get anywhere else. Eton, as I have already said, is so unlike other schools that it suggests possibilities which may not occur to those whose experience is limited to schools which, with all sorts of local differences, proceed on roughly the same lines. It always surprises me that so few Eton masters become Head Masters elsewhere: perhaps they are too happy: perhaps governing bodies share that prejudice against the home of aristocratic extravagance which I believe to be quite unjustified: perhaps, so far as I myself am concerned, I have not sufficiently studied the art of writing testimonials. There is no doubt that it is an art: my predecessor used to refer, in a splendid phrase, to those written by "a hirsute and emotional Welshman" which never failed to impress electors with the merits of the candidate whom he supported. But it is my reasoned conviction that an Eton master has a great deal to give to other schools—just as Eton, no doubt, gains greatly from the wise though unwritten rule which provides that at least half of its staff should be recruited from non-Etonians.

In this connection I should like to pay a tribute to ally realized, he says, that they betray real thought: in the scene when Jacob secures the birthright by fraud, few people notice that the linoleum in Isaac's study is the kind that could only be put down in the study of a blind man.

the generous welcome which the Etonian members of the staff pay to those who come from elsewhere. Wykehamists, perhaps, never cease to sigh for the delectable surroundings of their youth, but that is not the fault of their Eton colleagues, and for the rest I know of none who have not found it possible to combine their earlier loyalties with a real affection to so friendly an environment. If they sing that verse of the boating song which refers to Eton as "the best of schools" with any reservation, it is certainly not due to those with whom they work.

In this connection it may be worth while to remark that the praise given to Rugby in the song just mentioned as being possibly "more clever" is purely fortuitous: in the original version Harrow was given that hypothetical distinction and Rugby (no doubt for the sake of alliteration) allowed to "make more row." Etonian sentiment refused to endorse the tribute to the Hill, and alliteration has gone by the board.

The Etonian attitude to Harrow is incomprehensible to those who do not know the place. The animosity which is sometimes supposed to exist is quite unreal: in camp Etonians and Harrovians tend to fraternize and the relations between all members of the two schools who know one another are very friendly. But Etonian humour demands an object, and a pretended contempt for Harrow gives a very congenial opportunity for its display. Like all the best jokes, this one has no subtlety about it, and im-

proves with repetition. If it happens to amuse you to say that "forty years on" refers to the time when Harrow next hopes to win at Lord's, it will continue to amuse you however often you say it, and your enjoyment will be in no wise impaired by the knowledge that they may easily win at any moment. The attitude which Eton affects towards Harrow may be silly, and does not profess to be intelligent, but it is certainly not malicious.

Latin verse was for many years the subject in which Eton claimed pre-eminence, and it is probable that even now it produces more good Latin verse writers than any other school. In my early days there it was a very serious infliction on a newcomer who was expected to "patch" a very large number of very indifferent verses in a considerable variety of metres: I shall never forget having to prepare a set of Galliambics (a metre with which I was quite unfamiliar) for the critical eyes of Dr. Warre. To-day the demands are far less exacting, and it has been realized that for boys with no classical or literary gifts it is a waste of time to endeavour to emulate Horace or Ovid.

But Eton still retains, and very wisely, the tradition that all boys should learn in their youth the principles of scansion and should at least do "full sense" verses. It is a pleasant exercise, sharing some of the merits of a crossword puzzle, and those who hate it are boys who would hate at least equally any form of Latin composition; whether any should in

fact be demanded of them is a question to be considered later.

Latin verse, like Latin prose, has suffered from a confusion in the general mind between what is right for the expert and what is right for the ignoramus. Real Latin verse is one of the best of educational subjects: it teaches a boy to appreciate his own language in the process of trying to find a reasonable equivalent: several of the poems which I like best are verses which I learnt by heart in the process of translating them, and the practice is one of the reasons why it is comparatively unnecessary to "teach English" to good classical scholars.

At the other end of the scale, elementary verse writing has, as has been said, obvious merits, and it is clearly a good thing that boys should learn to appreciate quantity and metre: but between these two extremes lies a desert white with the bones of those who have no real literary gift and care as little for the English they are bidden to translate as for their own rendering. It is all to the good that their numbers have been drastically reduced.

The teaching of English, like the teaching of history, was in its infancy at Eton at the beginning of the century; I think that I was the first master to be invited by Dr. Warre to instruct boys in this subject. I cannot believe that my efforts were very successful, but I cherish the memory because of one incident which enlivened them. I had been quoting Dr. Hawtrey's translation of the lines in the *Iliad*

where Helen scans the Grecian host in the hope of seeing the brothers whom she had loved before she came to Troy, and wonders whether it is for the shame of her crime that they dare not stand in the council of heroes :

So said she: they long since in Earth's soft arms were  
reposing,  
There in their own dear land, their Fatherland,  
Lacedaemon.

It was a very junior member of my Division who called my attention to the parallel passage in *Vanity Fair*. "No more firing was heard at Brussels; the pursuit rolled miles away. Darkness came down on the field and city: and Amelia was praying for George who was lying on his face, dead, with a bullet through his heart." I am glad to think that my youthful pupil now occupies a distinguished place upon the Treasury Bench.

When I had been rather more than four years at Eton I was appointed Master in College, and began that happy association with Collegers which has given me some of my most cherished memories. The brief experience of one half as a bachelor Master in College—a half during which I had, to the best of my belief, no less than three successive housemaids called Ellen—was enough to convince me that I was unfit to manage a household alone. Miss Lyttelton was kind enough to take pity on my distress, and so began my association with what Arthur Benson used to call one of the great *gentes* of England: College perhaps



did not care about that, but it realized that its gain was almost as great as my own.

There is something, no doubt, to be said for a system which scatters scholars through all the houses of a school and diffuses intelligence in what might otherwise be Departments of Philistia: but there is a great deal more to be said for the system which, as at Eton and Winchester, brings them together, and makes sure that from the first the young boy of intelligence will find intelligent companions. There have been times when the Oppidan as such looked down on the Collegger, and in old days at Eton there may have been some grounds for the contempt: certainly there is a curious lack of distinction among the Colleggers of past centuries. It is strange that the only portrait in College Hall which all visitors recognize is that of Robert Walpole, perhaps the least academic of our Prime Ministers: I fancy that until the reform of last century influence had more than merit to do with their selection.

But whatever may have been the case in the past, no sensible Oppidan despises Colleggers to-day. In their early years, the two see comparatively little of one another, but in their last years affinities, whether intellectual or athletic, assert themselves, and there is no distinction between them in school, at cricket or on the river. The small Oppidan who believes Colleggers to be an inferior race is the same infant who believes that all big boys are monsters of vice, and that all masters were once superb athletes—probably

blues—and are now so old as to be barely human. What is certain is that very few old Collegers would not wish their sons to earn admission to that body, and that very many Oppidans cherish the same ambition.

While I was Master in College there were one or two generations of exceptional brilliance—boys for whom a distinguished future seemed inevitable—but they were precisely the generations of which the war took the heaviest toll. I will only mention Patrick Shaw Stewart, who won the Newcastle while still in jackets and was afterwards a scholar of Balliol and a Fellow of All Souls, and Charles Lister, whose erratic genius won him hosts of friends, and whose relations with the Labour party promised infinite diversion in the future. It is enough to say that the College Roll of Honour contains some thirty names of boys who were under me during my four years there, and that those names include some of the most brilliant and most lovable boys that I have ever known.

A Master in College is not called upon to be an innovator: on the contrary his attempts at change are watched with a careful and jealous eye: but I fancy that I can claim to have inaugurated the parties in College Hall on the evening of St. Andrew's Day when local patriotism finds vocal and reasonably musical expression. My predecessor, Mr. Goodhart, had done much for College singing: I was only able perhaps to popularize and certainly to debase it.

“Secular singing” became a very definite institution, with a ritual of its own, as for instance that all stood for the singing of “The Elephant Battery” with which its proceedings closed, and that all Welsh songs were sung with no attempt at anything but an English accent. This last phrase tempts me to a digression: a body of Eton ladies, presided over by Mrs. Cornish, used to meet to read French together: one of them who had done her best was surprised to hear the President say, with every appearance of commendation, “How *wise* of you not to *attempt* the French accent!”

“Sunday singing” was not quite so successful: I am disposed to attribute its partial failure to the unaccountable preference of one of its most regular members for the hymn prescribed in *Ancient and Modern* for Midday in a City Church. As our meetings took place in the evening the strain on the imagination was frankly intolerable.

These are very personal memories and have no moral or educational value: but I think that I can claim some for my Thursday afternoon tea-parties. The only rules were that no one spoke unless spoken to by me, or when asking his neighbour what he wanted to eat; that everyone looked after his left-hand neighbour, and that everyone read a book either lent or approved by myself. On most Thursdays the room was crowded, and boys used often to stay immersed in a comfortable chair and a good book for something like two hours. I verily believe that some

of them learnt in those parties to enjoy reading, and learnt it in the pleasantest fashion.

The invitation was limited to the junior members of College, and to the first twenty of them who might arrive: Ronnie Knox wrote an invitation card expressing the situation in admirable Greek:

*ὅστις ἂν εἰκοστὸς παρ' ἐμοῖς δεπᾶσσι καθίξῃ  
δέξομαι ἐν πάσῃ βρώματος ἀφθονίῃ·  
ὅς δ' ἂν ἐπ' εἰκοστῷ πελάσῃ κενὸν αὐτ' ἀποπέμψω,  
ἐστὶ γὰρ οὐ ψευδὲς ῥῆμα τὸ ΜΗΔΕΝ ΑΓΑΝ.*

Charles Lister drew a picture of a stout bear reaching for a bun with the legend, "Full Inside," which was displayed, as it often had to be, when the seats were all filled. I think that some such method of introducing boys to books is well worth trying: some boys are fortunate in having a parental library in which to browse: for those who have not, everything ought to be done, both by official and unofficial effort, to induce them to learn while at school how pleasant such browsing can be.

### 3

College, in those distant days, was a home of the writing of English verse, and I am proud to have done something to encourage it, for I should say of the making of English verse what Dr. Johnson said of the getting of money, that "there are few ways in which a man can be more innocently employed." At any rate, the budding poet causes none of those

tortures to his neighbours which the budding musician inflicts, and if he rises to no eminence he may at least hope, like Mr. Peter Magnus, to amuse his friends, though others, like Mr. Pickwick, may envy the ease with which they are entertained.

The fashion was set, and a high standard put forward, by R. A. Knox when a boy in jackets. I am proud to think that his first volume, *Signa Severa*, was dedicated to me, for I believe it to be the most remarkable collection of rhymes ever published by a schoolboy. (His second book was, I understand, dedicated to the Virgin Mary, though under a form of words which eluded the observation of his Protestant publishers.) Perhaps I may be allowed to quote a verse as indicating his facility: I had suggested to him that some recent improvements in School Yard might be carried further:

Powers of the Bursary, who, on a cursory  
View of the ruinous state of School Yard,  
Made us to travel securely on gravel,  
Is not the gravel a little too hard?  
Does not the scenery call for some greenery?  
Call for a garden, from which we might lop  
Calceolarias of suitable areas  
Worthy to rest on the bosoms of Pop?

My own pupils emulated him, though at a considerable distance, and when I was leaving, published a small volume called *Poets in Pupil Room* which, at least to my paternal eye, seemed to show considerable powers of versification. I quote one example, a

parody of Myers' *St. Paul*, which shows the variety of subjects which we had studied together and proves that one who is now a distinguished Professor of Economics had once a softer side:

I, who have made you songs in terza rima,  
I, who have droned you dirges for a cat,  
Aye, and could sing lamenting for a lemur,  
(Well may you wonder what I'm aiming at),

I, who have dabbled in the dreams of Dante,  
I, who have gibbered of the Golden Age,  
I, though my brain be fatuous and scanty,  
Though I be not a prophet or a sage,

I, who of old (the nominative pendent  
Is just a joke—there is no verb at all)  
Like some bright planet in the sky resplendent,  
Clad in a cloud, empurpled in a pall—

I, who at last have altered my intention,  
And like the rain upon the drooping herb,  
Gentle geranium or gaudy gentian,  
Send you the crowning mercy of a verb,

I, who am I, and no one shall deny it,  
I, who am I, and who shall say me nay?—  
Yes, on the house-tops and the hills I cry it,  
I have forgotten what I meant to say.

Another specimen I include partly for its metrical precision, and partly for love of its author, one of the bravest, blindest and most brilliant of the many brilliant boys for whom the War Office could find no more fitting work than to die as a subaltern in France.

I used to write in metres of the classical variety,  
 Hexameters, Tetrameters, with very scanty rhymes,  
 Long diatribes stuffed full of immorality, impiety,  
 Erotica, Sympotica, Psychology of Crimes;  
 How lucky that my efforts never struggled to publicity,  
 For now I've given up my Paganistic eccentricity,  
 A prodigal I seek again the fold of canonicity,  
 Cry *sacré* on Anacreon and daily read *The Times*.<sup>1</sup>

Eton, the home of Hookham Frere and Praed and Canning, has every right, and indeed the duty, to continue the tradition of humorous verse, and College in particular, where the name of J. K. Stephen is honoured for other reasons, should not forget the most brilliant of our parodists. Academic light verse is, I think, peculiarly English in character, and Quiller-Couch and Godley did much to keep the torch burning at Oxford: their works are, or should be, in the hands of all who care for such things: Eton and Oxford combined to inspire Sir William Anson,

<sup>1</sup> The following sonnet, found among his papers after he was killed, seems to me worthy of preservation, both for his sake and its own:

If I should die, be not concerned to know  
 The manner of my ending, if I fell  
 Leading a forlorn charge or crouching low,  
 Strangled by gas or shattered by a shell;  
 Nor try to see me in this death-in-life  
 Of filth and stinks and oaths and mud and sweat,  
 Cold in the dark upon the edge of strife,  
 Bored and afraid, irresolute and wet.  
 But if you think of me remember one  
 Who loved good dinners, curious parody,  
 Swimming and lying naked in the sun,  
 Latin hexameters and heraldry,  
 Athenian subtleties of "δῆ"s and "τοί"s,  
 Beethoven, Borticelli, beer and boys.

a typical product of both institutions, to write his brilliant but little known parody of Swinburne which contains at least two admirable verses:

If you were the Vice-Chancellor  
And I the poker bore,  
We'd wend our walks diurnal,  
Half formal, half fraternal,  
Like Gretel and like Hansel, or  
The Heavenly Twins of yore.  
If you were the Vice-Chancellor  
And I the poker bore.

If you, love, were the bonfire  
And I the college chairs,  
In fire we'd seek sensation  
Of mutual, glad cremation—  
Fire that seems sunk and gone—fire  
That faintlier—flickering—flares,  
If you, love, were the bonfire  
And I the college chairs.

The rest of the poem, with its correlation of the "classic poet" and "the humble crib" and the desolating vision of

Plato without his Jowett,  
A pen without a nib,

can be read in *More Echoes from the Oxford Magazine*, which, with its companion volume, *Echoes*, contains much delight for the lovers of rhyme. For in those days we had not learnt to despise "the jingling sound of like endings": rhyme had not yet



been consigned to that everlasting bonfire in which rhythm bids fair to join it. Perhaps we were all very wrong, but it was very pleasant while it lasted, and the day may come again when we are allowed to find happiness in our innocent jingles—that primitive and simple happiness which foreordained the “contrarieness” of Mary, and predestined Baby Bunting’s daddy to the chase. The present is not always right.

“I guess the gran’thers they knowed sunthin’, tu,” as Lowell’s Bridge remarked in the Biglow papers, and a question which Calverley propounded in a similar connection may still be reasonably asked :

Forever—’tis a single word!  
Our rude forefathers deemed it two:  
Nor am I confident they erred—  
Are you?

## 4

At the beginning of the century the strict classical régime at Eton, as elsewhere, was drawing to an end. Mathematics, modern languages and science had forced an entrance into the fortress and were by no means satisfied with the narrow quarters at present assigned to them. At Eton, Arthur Benson, himself a classic by upbringing, with a band of ardent followers, was walking daily round the walls, blowing threatening notes on his most mellifluous trumpet. Concessions were made: students of science were allowed some dispensations, though they still retained

their classical tutors and, in some cases at any rate, did Latin verse to the end: Henry Marten was allowed to gather round him a band of history specialists whose informal proceedings were viewed with grave suspicion: the Army Class succeeded in persuading Dr. Warre, who was a soldier at heart, to grant to it a freedom which no "Modern Side" would have dared to ask. Change was in the air and was scented with hope or apprehension by masters of conflicting temperaments.

At Eton the situation was complicated by the legacies of past history, and, for it to be properly understood, I must record some facts which will be familiar to Etonians, and, I fear, tedious to other readers. In ancient days, the Collegers were, of course, the only Etonians: they were instructed by their own masters and lived their own life. Gradually it became customary for the nobility and gentry who wished their sons to share their advantages to send them to live in the small town of Eton with tutors of their own: they lodged in boarding-houses kept by respectable ladies known as "dames." Miss Evans survived well into this century to sum up in her person all the virtues of the old régime. First as the tutor of some of her boys, and then as the husband of a Lyttelton, I was privileged to attend her breakfasts once a week, to admire her knowledge of her boys, and to witness the affection and respect which they felt for her.

As time went on, the College, thus perhaps

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developing into a School, employed these extraneous tutors (who were all of course classical scholars) to help in shepherding the combined flocks: hence arose the custom that every boy should have a classical tutor. When teachers of other subjects were introduced in the nineteenth century, as they were conspicuously by Dr. Hawtrey, their position was definitely inferior: they had no claim to the rank of tutor, and their remuneration was proportionately low. When in process of time some of them were eligible to preside over boarding-houses they inherited with the house the title of "dame," and this situation lasted into the present century. It led, incidentally, to some pleasant perversions of language: their wives, if any, were described as "Mrs. m'Dame," and the lady who presided over their domestic affairs would be known as "m'Dame's dame." So far the matter might be described as concerning only "words and names and matters of our law," and the Head Master, like a wise Gallio, "cared for none of these things": but there were grievances of substance in the background. The classical tutor, to whom each boy was assigned, claimed, and by law exercised, an equal authority with the housemaster over their common charge: both signatures were equally necessary for privilege or punishment and the "dame's" primacy was by no means a matter of course. Sometimes this worked admirably, for some classical tutors were at least as wise as some of their senior non-classical colleagues,

and were able to give them real help, but it was not a position in which teachers of other subjects could be expected to acquiesce. It was all very well for us classicists to say (with truth) that a good "dame" would have no difficulty in overcoming the handicap of his name or in asserting his authority in his own house: the question remained why he should be subjected to any sort of disability, and the growing impatience with the classics strengthened his case. It should be added that (though both sides were too well-bred to say much about it) there was no very obvious reason why he should be paid for his work on an inferior scale.

Such was the field on which the battle was joined: it was a war of innumerable pamphlets and countless meetings held very late at night: I recall the soup which rallied the flagging classical forces at midnight, and the envy excited by one of our number who was apparently able to go on talking in his sleep. Feeling ran very high, and I was myself nearly the victim of its acerbity. When the controversy was at its height, I circulated a copy of verses in which I endeavoured to laugh at the excesses of both sides. One of my mathematical opponents, not perhaps (to use Sir Francis Doyle's famous phrase) "as sound a judge of poetry as he was of port," declared the verses to be "in execrable taste" and denounced me to the Head Master. My position was precarious, for Dr. Warre was not himself more certain to be amused than Queen Victoria would have been. (I remember

once quoting to him some lines of J.K.S. which praised his tutor for saving him from parricide, beginning:

If ever I did not imbrue  
The hastily ensanguined blade  
Within my parent's breast—'twas you  
The thought that stayed,

and his only comment was, "Ah, poor fellow, it was very sad.") So I awaited sentence, trembling: but luckily the leader of the Modernist party, being an Irishman, prided himself on his sense of humour; he issued a pamphlet beginning, "Mr. Alington has, with healing hand, poured oil upon the troubled waters," and after that it was no longer possible to denounce me as a wilful breaker of the peace.

Dr. Lyttelton inherited the unfinished controversy, and indeed its mutterings were heard throughout his reign, though the modernists were clearly the winning side and the concession of the title "Modern Tutor" marked their victory: it was not till I returned to Eton some eight years later that the financial situation was stabilized by arrangements of extreme complexity, which have perhaps only endured because so few people fully understand them.

## 5

I ought not, perhaps, to pass over in silence my brief and chequered career in the O.T.C. When the South African War broke out, a wave of patriotism carried into the Corps a considerable number of masters and almost all the more distinguished boys. Only one member of Pop refused to join—a boy destined to be known later on as one of the most formidable and efficient of adjutants at Sandhurst. It is difficult for the present generation to take the South African War with gravity, but we had no doubts of its seriousness: I still remember the shock with which I saw on a poster at Reading the almost unbelievable news of the first British disaster: I returned to Eton to find the place in mourning for the Adjutant, Major Myers, who had thrown up his appointment to hurry to the front, and lost his life in the very first engagement at Nicholson's Nek. His name is preserved at Eton by his most generous gifts, and by a tablet in Lower Chapel which appears at first sight to claim the Deity as an Old Etonian.<sup>1</sup>

In those days there was no nonsense about masters necessarily holding commissions: my colleagues and

<sup>1</sup> It begins:

Vos, qui inter hos parietes  
DEUM adorabitis  
Etonensem inter Etonenses. . . .

I served in the ranks, and I was one of those to whom no prospect of promotion was ever vouchsafed. I have no grievance, for I know myself to be lacking in the most essential of military gifts—a capacity for keeping step. I wish I could say that that was my only fault as a soldier, but memory records a horrid occasion when I was found to be wearing buttoned boots (then not uncommon) on Inspection Day. I had quite genuinely supposed that the citizen soldier leapt to the call of duty shod as when the call came to him, but the Captain of my Company had different views. I spent a miserable hour fearing that I should be put to public shame and doing my best to conceal my delinquency. Only those who have tried to stand very straight upright, and at the same time to keep the bottoms of their military trousers well down over their boots can know what I went through—and I fear that the number of potential sympathizers must be few.

I left the Corps, unlamented, after two years, and like to think that I still carry with me an honourable scar. In those days we wore helmets with spikes which, when off duty, we screwed cunningly into the inside: the incautious soldier, clapping his helmet on his head with the spike still *in situ* was lucky to escape with a mere scalp wound. I never went to Camp as my hardier companions did: I remember the quartermaster (he had been promoted because, having been number seven when we first numbered off, he insisted on answering “Seven” at each sub-

sequent parade) announcing that their telegraphic address would be "Scroggs' Bottom"—surely one of the most uncompromising addresses on record.

I should be sorry if this brief account of my own military shortcomings led the reader to think that the Corps as a whole partook of my inefficiency; then, as always, there was a considerable number of masters and boys who were admirably efficient, and a considerable number of the latter to whom it did great good. To be exercised in command gives a boy self-confidence, and the O.T.C. often brings out the capacity of one who does not excel in games: nor can it be doubted that it does everyone good to be taught for a time to do exactly as he is told.

Of one thing I am perfectly certain, and that is that the O.T.C. does not encourage militarism. English boys being what they are, it is far more likely to disgust them with it. They serve their time in it, some happily and some not, from a sense of duty to their country, and I think they are perfectly right: so long as war remains, as I fear it must for some time yet to come, a conceivable thing, and so long as our military authorities tell us, as they very sensibly do, that the supply of reasonably competent officers is of importance to the country, so long the average decent boy will feel some obligation to respond. If his principles, or those of his parents, forbid him to do so, I know of no instance of his suffering in public estimation, but such cases are rare. There is no sort of reason to suppose that he joins



because he "likes war," or that he will like it any better because of his military training.

So far as the school itself is concerned, and putting national responsibilities aside, I cannot join with those who are enthusiastic for its value: it does some good undoubtedly, as has been said, but from this admittedly narrow point of view more would, I have no doubt, be gained by devoting a similar amount of time to physical training.

Physical training was introduced by Dr. Lyttelton at Eton as a regular part of the school curriculum: I remember an enthusiast being had down to address a Masters' meeting and to demonstrate on a table the exercises involved. So far all went well, but when he declared that the practice would ensure prompt obedience to any orders that masters might give, Mr. Luxmoore rose and said, amid general applause, that he found that he was, if anything, too promptly obeyed already.

However, physical training began, and some masters, not in their first youth, took some instructional courses: when the news got abroad, some boys secreted themselves in the gymnasium to observe the rites with edification not unmixed with alarm, for, as a small pupil confided to me, it was generally supposed to be "a swiping matter" if one saw the Head Master in such unacademic posture.

In the course of time such training became a regular part of the smaller boys' work and was done in school hours: this became difficult during the war

through lack of instructors, and was not revived after its close. If it is necessary to defend that decision, I should say that Eton school hours are exceptionally short, that Eton boys have unusually good opportunities of keeping themselves in good condition, and that, if their games do not produce this result, it is they and not their work which should be curtailed. Physical training became voluntary, though there was a competent staff to deal with any boys for whom the doctors might suggest remedial treatment. I have seen admirable results at other schools of general physical training, and should have welcomed any suggestion for its adoption which did not interfere with work: I was not myself prepared to urge it, having an unreasoned conviction that most people live, on the whole, quite as long as it is desirable that they should.

This digression has carried me a long way from the South African War with which it began: let me record one other cherished memory of that time. In the darkest days of the war Dr. Henson was preaching at Eton, and staying with the Head Master, and I was invited to dine with my brother members of All Souls. After dinner the preacher held forth with his wonted eloquence on the defects of our generals and on the tactics to be pursued: Dr. Warre, himself a considerable tactician, listened attentively, and at the end, dropping a huge hand on that of his visitor on the table, said, "Now, my dear fellow, dat's all bosh! dat's all bosh!" Dr. Henson

was so surprised at this frontal attack, that he relapsed for once into complete silence: no more was said: but when I later on inherited that dining-table I confess that I had thoughts of inserting into it a commemorative tablet.

I learnt, as I have said, a great deal at Eton, and perhaps this will be the best moment for stating a few principles which I then came to adopt: they will seem less offensive coming from an assistant master than as the pontifical utterances of a Head. They will not interest any but schoolmasters, and I shall not complain if some of the latter regard them as purely priggish precepts: I can only say that experience has not weakened my belief in them: at any rate, they are not quite as numerous as President Wilson's!

- i. Boys hate uncertainty: you cannot be in an equally good (or bad) temper every day, but it is your first duty to endeavour so to be.
- ii. Boys love individuality: anything that you can do to make your Division have a life of its own is well worth trying.
- iii. Boys are great ritualists: a boy appointed Lord High Scavenger does not resent having to keep a school-room tidy.
- iv. Boys love small rewards: the prospect of being let out five minutes early will stimulate a boy to incredible exertions.
- v. Boys do not mind being punished if they have been clearly warned beforehand. A regular system saves infinite friction.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Punishments can be alleviated by a touch of humour. Unpunctual Marlburians who had to write verses did so the more

- vi. Punctuality is the politeness of pedagogues: it is when they are late for school that such bullying as now takes place is likely to occur.
- vii. As boys have to go to chapel it is an honourable obligation of masters to attend whenever they can.
- viii. To make young boys construe imposes an intolerable strain on the attention of the rest and makes progress too slow. The more questions you can ask the better: this rewards the alert boy—one to whom you ought to be most grateful.
- ix. If you use marks (as I think you should) use them by a well-defined method: boys—small boys—like to know just how and where they succeed or fail.
- x. If you try to teach repetition (as you should) you will find that to make a Division all learn and repeat together saves you time and temper and produces surprising results.
- xi. Remember that if you are bored yourself the infection will inevitably spread.
- xii. Do not be afraid to confess to ignorance, or to own a mistake. Pedagogues, like politicians, cherish the illusion that others think them infallible; “to err is human,” to confess error, if not divine, is a sure, but unfrequented, road to the public heart.
- xiii. Never forget that praise is longer remembered and more ultimately effectual than blame: and look out for every opportunity of awarding it.

Varied memories of these instructive years jostle confusedly in my brain: some national, as of our willingly because they were known as Automatic Poems. Small Etonians who had to write additional pages for Sunday or History Questions were glad to have the major and minor penalties known (for obvious reasons) as the Owl and the Pussy-cat. My wife, in early days, would be surprised to hear a boy say with the utmost gravity, “Sir, I’ve brought my Owl,” or, “Sir, can I have longer for my Pussy-cat?” and for some obscure reason they resented the punishment less.

torch procession to Windsor Castle on Mafeking night, while the young ladies of Eton Town flourished "tiddlers" in our faces: or of the sudden hush that ran round the ground at the Winchester match as the news of the King's desperate illness spread: some royal, as of King Edward, now happily recovered, and Queen Alexandra departing from Eton in the Royal Barge: some personal, as of a first sermon in Lower Chapel or (still worse) in College Chapel: some meteorological, as of the floods which left Upper Club covered with seaweed at the end of June, and removed the Winchester match to Agar's Plough: some criminal, as of my pupil who used to smoke on the roof of Chapel when the scaffolding made access easier,<sup>1</sup> or the Earl who was detected digging a channel in his tutor's garden in the hope that the flood water might be deflected into the cellar and the house be sent home early: some professional, as of the occasion when Dr. Warre called our attention in Chambers to the number of watches stolen on the Fourth of June, and, quite oblivious of the joke, went on to embroider the theme that unless masters were watchful and kept a good watch such scandals were certain to recur.

<sup>1</sup> His crime reminds me of the experience of a distinguished Head Master who used at Confirmation to ask the boys what was their besetting sin: resenting this, they agreed on a policy: and all with one accord replied that, though they fought hard against the temptation, it proved impossible to avoid getting out at night and smoking cigarettes on the roof. The Head Master, too trustful to doubt such information and too generous to act on it, spent many anxious nights expecting the school to be burnt down.

And so farewell, for a time, to Eton, and to those personalities which had dominated the scene—personalities eyed with an affectionate and discriminating reverence by all their junior colleagues: to Frank Rawlins, scholar and man of affairs, who lived to disprove the dictum that the really competent are never really kind: to Henry Luxmoore, the incarnation of all that was beautiful and severe in Eton tradition, the most formidable and best loved of tutors: to the omniscient Henry Broadbent, “most kindly of critics, most critical friend,” and to many others whose kindness and companionship had made Eton life delightful: farewell to pupils of every variety of intelligence but of a singular good will—to Divisions by turns docile and obstreperous, intelligent and unteachable: farewell, above all, to College, the home of many undying memories—College which had, I dare to hope, forgiven my alien extraction and taken me to itself—College which may remember that though (or perhaps because) I never played the game myself I am one of the very few Masters in College who was never beaten at the Wall!

NOTE.—A scrap of dialogue may be preserved which throws light on the character of two of Eton’s great personalities.

Austen Leigh met Luxmoore at the beginning of a half.

E.C.A.L.: I hope you have enjoyed your holidays, Luxmoore?

H.E.L. (*with mock humility*): Much more than I deserved.

E.C.A.L. (*with a triumphant cackle*): I should hope so!

## 6

In the year 1905 Bishop Percival suggested that I should become Head Master of Clifton. I was much honoured by the invitation which I understood that he was in a position to give, and should very likely have accepted it had he not mentioned, as an additional inducement, that there was a great opportunity for social and municipal work in Bristol. I was rather alarmed at the thought that this might be expected of me, for I have always felt that a Head Master ought to have quite enough to do in trying to manage a school, and this combined with other reasons to make me refuse. A new Head Master had just been appointed at Eton, under whom interesting developments seemed possible: I was very happy in the work I had so recently begun and not ambitious for a "wider sphere." So Clifton escaped.<sup>1</sup>

It is difficult to say whether Uppingham's escape was narrower or not. I was approached by a representative of the Governing Body who gave me to understand that if my name were submitted to

<sup>1</sup> My brother-in-law, the new Head Master, cannot be blamed for the decision: when his sister told him of it his only comment was, "Ah, my lass, no one ever yet hurt a place by leaving it!"

them it would be enthusiastically received. It was difficult to refuse so flattering a suggestion, and Uppingham at any rate seemed remote from social questions. So my name was submitted—and did not appear in the list of selected candidates. I was told afterwards that I was thought to have behaved very badly in concealing my close acquaintance with the outgoing Head Master (whom I barely knew by sight).

Not long after, the Head-Mastership of Shrewsbury fell vacant. Having, during the days of my brief and somewhat one-sided flirtation with Uppingham, come definitely to envisage the prospect of leaving Eton, I was not unprepared to go: domestic reasons conspired to make a change desirable, for the quarters of the Master in College, delightful as they are, do not lend themselves to the requirements of a nursery, and my daughter was clamorous for more accommodation: so we were all well pleased when Shrewsbury did me the honour of appointing me to succeed Mr. Moss. I had never seen the place, except for a brief visit to play football for the Casuals in my Oxford days, when I contributed materially to one of the few defeats which the School has inflicted on that distinguished club. I have always maintained that it was impossible to keep goal well and at the same time to watch the glories of a sunset over the Welsh hills.

But to see Shrewsbury again was to fall in love with the place, and I mean no discourtesy to the other



great schools which I have mentioned when I give thanks to the kindly Providence which reserved me for the banks of the Severn. This is perhaps the place to quote the beautiful tribute paid to that most lovely of rivers by a distinguished Old Salopian, Mr. Nevinson :

Other rivers may be called majestic, and we talk of Father Tiber or Father Thames, but no one ever called the Severn father, or praised her but for her grace: for she is like the body and soul of a princess straight from a western fairyland—so wild and pliant, so full of laughter and of mystery, so uncertain in her gay and sorrowing moods. On my word, though the science of education must be a very splendid thing, untaught, uninstructed as we Shrewsbury boys would now be considered, I would not change places with the most scientifically educated man in England who had never known a river such as that.

After which, I will not insult “ Sabrina fair ” with my trivial praise, and will content myself with adding Amen.

## CHAPTER VII

### I

THE fame of Shrewsbury was securely established in the nineteenth century by a succession of three great Head Masters who presided over its destinies for no less than a hundred and ten years: Butler (afterwards Bishop of Lichfield) from 1798 to 1836, Kennedy, of Latin grammar fame, from 1836 to 1866, and Moss from 1866 to 1908. Its reputation as a home of classical scholars was well deserved: the honour board records, for instance, that the Ireland Scholarship at Oxford was won for six out of seven consecutive years by Salopians, and the records further show that the fifth of these champions was a boy who won it while still at school, and that among his competitors was no less a person than Mr. Gladstone.<sup>1</sup>

This was, of course, in Dr. Butler's time, but it is needless to say that scholarship flourished equally under Dr. Kennedy, and won for Shrewsbury a place

<sup>1</sup> Gladstone (who was bracketed second) said in a letter to his father that the winner was preferred "chiefly on his having written short and concise answers while ours were long winded." As he goes on to mention "a prevalent impression that the Shrewsbury system is radically a false one," I must retaliate by recording on Lord Morley's authority that Mr. G.'s essay was marked "desultory beyond belief." (*Life of Gladstone*, I, pp. 61, 62.)

among the nine schools specially recognized as such by the Public Schools Commission. Mr. Moss was admirably fitted to carry on the traditions of his own instructor, and it was not until my own advent that the great line was broken.<sup>1</sup>

What exactly those traditions were I have often tried to ascertain, but without great success. One fact of interest I can record, which is that in the days when their skill in composition was most renowned the boys had very little direct practice in the art: they read prodigiously, and there can be no doubt that for boys with good memory there is no better method of acquiring a classical style or styles. In this as in other ways the classics have suffered from being read in the snippets which were for some time the normal provision.

Dr. Kennedy owed some of his success to an extreme ferocity of manner; and it was not uncommon for a boy who failed in construing to be summarily expelled from the school: he had to depart and was concealed in an inconspicuous part of the building by the Miss Kennedys, who fed him surreptitiously, like a pair of feminine Obadiahs, till it was safe for him once more to enter the presence of the Doctor.

But the ferocity of these heroic pedagogues was only skin deep: it is on record that Butler once

<sup>1</sup> I must give myself the pleasure of stating that Shrewsbury had sixteen Senior Classics in the years 1827-76, and won the Porson Prize thirty-seven times between 1823 and 1882, and fifteen times between 1849 and 1864.

entered a schoolroom unexpectedly, to find on a blackboard the legend "Butler is an old fool." The boys waited horror-struck, but the Head Master approached the blackboard, eyed it carefully, and then remarked with a sigh, "The melancholy truth stares me in the face."

These old scholars were shrewd judges of the meaning of a word. When the burgesses of Shrewsbury tried to prove that their sons should be educated for nothing at a "Free" School, they had no difficulty in showing that the words "*libera schola*" meant nothing of the kind: on the contrary, it meant that the School was free from all outside interference. The story is told that the only reason why Dickens chose *Our Mutual Friend* for the title of one of his novels was to annoy Dr. Kennedy, who had demonstrated unanswerably that the phrase is a linguistic monstrosity.

I believe that historians of public schools are disposed to maintain that many of the new methods ascribed to Dr. Arnold had in fact been anticipated at Shrewsbury, and in particular the prefect system, but I am not brave enough to offend Rugbeian sentiment, nor have I any desire to detract from Dr. Arnold's glory. Mr. Lytton Strachey, I seem to remember, blames him for looking a little puzzled: but then he lived in an age before complete knowledge of the mysteries of the universe had been revealed to literary babes.

Mr. Moss's great achievement was the removal

of the school from its ancient quarters in the town to a site across the river. They bade farewell to the historic figures of Polymathes and Philomathes which had guarded their entrance, and to much old tradition, but received in exchange the ampler ether and diviner air of a splendid site looking down upon the Severn. The move made possible all the later development of the school, and it is difficult to be sufficiently grateful to the prime mover. It need hardly be said that it was accomplished in the face of violent opposition from many of those who loved the school most.

Such conservatism was not unnatural, and may be thought to have been inculcated in youth, for there existed a pleasant custom by which the Hall Crier (a boy appointed in each house to give out notices of general interest) was bidden to end his speech by crying "God save the King, and down with the Radicals!" I am bound to add that I noticed no political effects of this ritual, any more than I had found that Collegers were led to Popery by the fact that they used to sing a hymn undoubtedly invoking the prayers of Rex Henricus.

The new site was spacious, but not spacious enough, and Shrewsbury's experience can be quoted in support of those who maintain that no school has ever regretted buying land in its vicinity: Eton is among those which have had to pay in hard cash for the lack of foresight displayed by their rulers, and should never forget its debt of gratitude to those who

in one generation saved it Agar's Plough and in the next preserved for it the upper reaches of the river.

When I came to Shrewsbury the situation was somewhat precarious. The move had alienated some Salopian sympathy, and the numbers had shrunk to an alarming level: the Governing Body had felt compelled to sell a Caxton from the school library—an act which roused passionate hostility among old members of the school, few of whom had even a bowing acquaintance with the work. But their instinct was sound: the Caxton was re-purchased and re-presented to the school: at the first Governing Body meeting which I attended the Governors were engaged in gratefully accepting a cheque for £1,000, and rather sulkily promising never to do it again.

I say the instinct was sound, for the sale was an act of "defeatism," and there never was a school which had less need than Shrewsbury to envisage the possibility of defeat. Its traditions and its site were alone enough to make it secure, and all that was needed was some faith in its future and the immediate expenditure of some money.

The faith I was ready and indeed eager to supply: and, if it can hardly be said that eagerness is the right word to describe the Governing Body's attitude towards expenditure, the money was at any rate provided. Thanks to them, and thanks to the generosity of Old Salopians, much was done in the next few years to develop worthily the opportunities which Mr. Moss's wisdom had provided.

The Shrewsbury Governing Body was of the type provided by the Public Schools Commission for practically all such schools, and shared its merit and its defect. The merit is that it brings into relation with the school a number of distinguished people: the defect is that, if these gentlemen are sufficiently distinguished, they tend to be too busy to attend to the school affairs, which fall into the hands of a local committee. This may sometimes tend to what is in fact an over-representation of the people on the spot, for everyone knows that those who can easily attend meetings have a very unfair advantage over those who cannot.

Speaking with a quarter of a century's experience of governing bodies, I can only say that I have found them curiously human. I do not mean this altogether in praise, for it is a human characteristic to enjoy demonstrating power over those whom we employ, and even the best of us are strangely incurious of the feelings of our subordinates. Most Head Masters have had the experience of being kicked rather sharply from behind by bodies upon whom it is impossible to retaliate in kind. But generally speaking they take an immense amount of trouble, and if (an important qualification) they have a real interest and belief in the school which they administer, the Head Master's task is a happy one.

My relations with my Governors at Shrewsbury were very happy and I owe them a great debt of grati-

tude. This is not to say that we had no disagreements or difficulties. When I first went there I found that the Head Master was only allowed to be present at a brief period of their meetings, with the result that matters on which his opinion was clearly worth hearing were discussed in his absence. By introducing some errors into the minutes, I secured the right of being present when they were corrected, and, as it hardly seemed worth while to make me withdraw again, I succeeded in being unconstitutionally present throughout. If I cherish the memory of a day when my secretary travelled post-haste from Herefordshire to lie in wait for my Chairman on the steps of his house in Belgrave Square, and to lay my resignation before him at an hour when his vitality would be lowest, it is partly at least because the episode ended, if not in kissing again with tears, at least in a most generous reconciliation. Lest my recollection of Governing Body meetings should seem to have been mainly stormy or deceitful, let me add a little tale which has always given me some amusement. There was in my charge a certain herbaceous border, the condition of which I wished to bring before the Local Committee: I dictated the appropriate note to my secretary, but was surprised to read on the agenda, "No. 5. The Head Master wishes to bring before the Committee the matter of the loquacious boarder." Head Masters generally have to deal with such difficulties unaided.

Lord Bridgeman, the late Chairman of the



Governors, whose death leaves so many good men and good causes in mourning, was the one to whom I owed most, and I can imagine no one better fitted to deal with the problem last suggested: he was invaluable in interesting the county in its school and supplied a countless stream of virtuous local peers to grace our official occasions. The trouble was that though all were ready, from a high sense of duty, to make speeches, few of them had ever learnt to leave off: it became necessary to encourage speech-making in the open air, which proved to have the deterrent effect required.

But we had very pleasant visitors from outside on our great occasions: the Duke of Teck, whose trouble was that he could not read the speech Willie Bridgeman had written for him, or decide whether it was "loquacity" or "sagacity" or "pugnacity" for which I had to be praised: Mr. Bonar Law,<sup>1</sup> most lovable of Scots, who played chess for a whole afternoon, one hand against the other, to save himself from having to study Shropshire agriculture on the

<sup>1</sup> I have always thought it hard that the picture of Mr. Bonar Law and me at the Shrewsbury Speech Day in the *Daily Mail* bore the legend, "British Heroes in the hands of the Huns." Perhaps I may be allowed to relate a story which he once told me when I was lunching with him in Downing Street. Mr. Gladstone's name was mentioned, and he told me how once, passing into the garden which he shared with the Prime Minister, he found him and M. Clemenceau in conversation. "I asked 'What are you talking about?' and they said 'Mr. Gladstone.' I said 'He was a great humbug,' and Mr. Lloyd George, putting his arm round Clemenceau's neck, said 'But all *very* great statesmen are *very* great humbugs!'" It would make a fine scene for an historical artist.

spot: Sir William Anson, whom I found dancing by himself in the garden after early service on Sunday, when the news of Eton's victory in 1910 had just arrived: the Bishop of St. Albans, who told the school that he thought their assembled parents were "a very good-looking lot—on the whole": Alfred Lyttelton, my brother-in-law, who as usual won all hearts: and Lord Milner, than whom I have known no one easier to love at first sight.

My appointment to Shrewsbury had a curious and disquieting sequel. *The Times* next day came out with a leading article headed "The Shrewsbury Disaster." Inadequate as I felt myself to be, I was unprepared for so uncompromising a criticism: it was with infinite relief that, when at last I summoned up the courage to read it, I found it referred to the report on a serious railway accident which had occurred at the station several months before.

But my troubles were not yet over: I was appointed at the end of the Easter term, and when I went home to Herefordshire for the holidays I received a letter from Mr. Moss saying that he found my appointment to be very unpopular. He suggested that he should gather the school together, as they had not yet broken up, and that I should come to Shrewsbury and endeavour to justify it. I have never before or since had so uninviting a request for oratory; it would have been indeed what the Quakers call "a very cold opportunity." I declined, and was

relieved to hear in a few days from Mr. Moss that the situation was not quite as serious as he had feared.<sup>1</sup>

## 2

When I arrived at Shrewsbury, I found myself, to my surprise, to be, at the mature age of thirty-five, younger than any member of the regular staff, and had I not brought with me a very competent soldier I might have found myself compelled to assume the command of the O.T.C. The debt which Shrewsbury owed in those days to its senior masters it is impossible to exaggerate: they were extremely ill-paid and there was no pension system, but many of them had served for years with a loyalty which cannot be overpraised. Two in particular, Messrs. Moser and Chance, were rightly regarded by Old Salopians as the pillars of the state: they were both old members of the school and zealous guardians of its tradition, and both by their public service and their private generosity deserved the praise which the author of Ecclesiasticus bestows on famous men.

It was necessary, as the school grew in numbers, to call in younger men to join the staff, and few Head Masters can have been as fortunate as I was in the young men who then came to Shrewsbury. When

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Moss took pleasure in the fact that the Herefordshire village to which he retired bore the name of Much Birch, a name appropriate for a schoolmaster: his telegraphic address, which also gave him satisfaction, was Wormelow Tump.

the war came we paid the penalty, and I doubt if there was any school in England which lost a larger proportion of its masters. The heart of every Head Master knoweth its own bitterness, but I may be forgiven for thinking that the six whom we lost were among the most remarkable of their profession. Two of them, Malcolm White and Evelyn Southwell, were commemorated in a small volume privately printed, called *Two Men*, which I take leave to regard as one of the most vivid of war records. White was a great musician—"the most true 'artist,' in the full sense, that I have ever known," his friend said of him, and his last letter to Southwell before his final fight shows something of the spirit of them both. "Oh, man, I can't write now, I am too like a coach before the Bumping races or Challenge Oars.

"So, man, good luck.

"Our New House and Shrewsbury are immortal, which is a great comfort."

His last letter to me, written on the same day, ends with the words, "Oh! I meant to say that there are five officers in the company, and three of us are quoting *The Wrong Box* pretty frequently and much to the annoyance of the other two."

Two days later he was writing to his family, "It seems to me that, if I die in this action, it gives me a great simple chance of making up for a lot of selfishness in the past, and when I want to reconcile myself to the idea of not coming back again, I just think of all those selfish mistakes I've made, and I am almost

glad of the opportunity to put them right. That's my view of it. It is not priggish—I hope it doesn't sound like that."

In days when so many books are written to describe the sordid horrors of war, I find myself turning back to *Two Men* to remind myself of the spirit in which English gentlemen fought and died.

Evelyn Southwell was an Etonian who had rowed for two years in the Oxford boat. He was a Demy of Magdalen, and from the moment when, by a fortunate accident, he came to Shrewsbury it was obvious that he had a real genius for the profession. Among other things he taught his fifth form to write English verse, and the small volume of their efforts which we printed witnessed to a really remarkable achievement. His secret lay in his enthusiasm, whether for music or the Shropshire hills or Latin verse or the river. Some lines written about him by Ronnie Knox (who came to take his form when he went to fight) show this aspect of his character.

*Laudatori Optimo*

Players before an empty house  
October's pageants go,  
That now no plaudits can arouse  
From you, who loved them so.

By you unheeded, as of old,  
The tyrant autumn breeze  
Will strew our pavements with the gold  
It plunders from the trees:

Unmarked by you the swallows' flights,  
Cloud-shapes, and chimney tunes,  
And friendly blaze of schoolroom lights  
On mist-wreathed afternoons.

There is no light on hill or plain,  
No sigh of wind or wood,  
But seems as if it watched in vain  
To hear your "Man, that's good!"

But where on some uncharted shore  
Fearlessly you look down,  
A nearer pilgrim than before  
To that Eternal Town,

How you must cry aloud, in praise!  
God send one echo through,  
To cheer the dull and dusty days  
That sunder us from you!

And here is something of his own which shows, I think, that he had not only the power of feeling but the power of expressing what he felt:

*A Page or Two of Good Things*

These are some of the things I love, and God pity those who find nothing dear among them all.

Maps; and route marches. And Gothic architecture; yes, and the little village spire rising out of the green. And hills; hills from the plains, or the plains from the hills—I do not know which is better. Autumn mists, and new books, and the sound of early football; and, with that, a large table and a scholar's morning; and the memory of many patient men unsung. Small books and sluices amid the water-meadows, and their reeds like tongues of fire: and great rivers also, and big ships that ride them in the harbour. And dust in early spring, and

the great white road swinging over the Downs, and the lane that brings you to the fairies in the lonely dingle. Bach's fugues also, and the sad songs of much infantry singing together. And bridges, whether over water or rail, especially if there is the sun dancing over all. And green fields after London, but more, London after the wilderness. Old books and their fragrance and their endless columns. And paintings by Murillo: horseback at dawn: railway journeys, long and book-full: and running, but not fast or far; for I am a poor athlete. Sleep; and food after hunger; and drink after thirst, especially brown Army tea in the heat: and trees, especially the silver birch and the slim lady poplar: and French peasants and their kind farewells: and Eton's fields under midsummer floods in boiling June, with the Winchester match to follow. Bells, especially in the less dear places, for these bring a swifter memory; as you may hear in the ward at Hazebrouck, and remember many great towers and little belfries of home. And there are good things to be done in a boat with the right man to help, and the right part of the river to do them in, and no crowds shouting, unless it be in the re-told tales when the lamps are lit and the row is over. And that is a good moment when the dusty Company piles arms in bivouac after a long day; but less good than "Stand down" after a night of watching, when the larks fly neutral over No Man's Land and the sun has made up its mind. And the ancient Greek tongue, because it is the perfect tongue; and the Latin, because it has fought and conquered the centuries. And a high wind on the Shropshire hills is good, and the smell of hay at evening. And the theatre and full-hearted applause, such as men and women give in England, but not in France, where they do it for hire. And best, surely, is the coming *home* on leave of a soldier!

But most, far most of all, that which I most rarely find; and what it is you will look in vain to guess, for I cannot and will not tell.

The thought of Southwell leads me naturally to the river, for it was he, with Everard Kitchin, who laid the foundation for that triumphant edifice of Shrewsbury rowing which the survivor has lived to erect. My own aquatic experience has been somewhat unfortunate: when I went to Shrewsbury an enthusiastic journalist observed that my knowledge of oarsmanship was acquired at Marlborough, and those who are familiar with the Kennet will appreciate the limitations implied. But I have always maintained that my greatest service to Shrewsbury was to get the Eight to Henley, and I am prepared to contend to the uttermost with any who try to rob me of that particular laurel. We got there just before the war: during the war, Eton and we were the only schools which went there, and my crew was annually butchered for the delectation of Mr. de Havilland—one of the greatest of coaches, who confided to me that his idea of a good race was one where his opponent was many, many lengths behind. We had two good races of that type before I went to Eton: since that date I have been repeatedly reproached with allowing Eton's primacy on the river to be not unsuccessfully assailed by crews from the Severn. I cannot remember that Frankenstein's monster ever threatened him with public humiliation.

Before I leave the River Severn, I must tell one story of the methods there prevailing. A certain member of a crew had given dissatisfaction: the coach shouted through his megaphone "Get out,



Six! ”: the cox, unprepared for such an order, turned the boat towards the shore, and the voice repeated “ I didn’t say, ‘ Come in, cox ’: I said, ‘ Get out, Six.’ ” So a somewhat indignant Six got out and swam gloomily to the shore: as far as he was concerned, the afternoon was perhaps not ill-spent.

I have already hinted that I am no aquatic expert, nor will I enter into that controversy as to the moral character of wetbobs and drybobs respectively, on which Dr. Warre held such very definite views, but I should like to put on record my thankfulness for having been connected with two schools which afforded at least two very different outlets for athletic energy.<sup>1</sup> It is a horrid thing when a school has all its athletic eggs in one basket, and one particular type of athletic boy commands the admiration of his fellows. I have known schools in which cricket, Rugby football and Association football have each exercised a disastrous domination. Shrewsbury was in no such danger, for besides cricket and rowing and football it paid considerable honour to running: in some of its runs practically the whole school took part: there was an ingenious system of “ all ups ” which meant that at certain points everyone waited for the laggards. Competition was limited to the

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Warre tended, I think, to the heresy that the proper place for all boys was the river. A famous speech to his house, saying that an evil element had crept in which must be stamped out was generally held to allude to drybobs: but as the smaller boys thought that he said “ evil elephant ” they were left in some doubt how the operation was to be performed.

“run in” after the last of these, and it was the duty of the “gentlemen of the Hunt” to shepherd the small, the infirm and the aged (for some masters took part) safely to their journey’s end.

Fives was also in good repute, and I was thankful to find that the type played was that of Eton, which I had learnt to regard as far the best: it affords a scope for strategy and for a certain low cunning comparatively absent from other varieties of the game: which is the reason why masters can often surmount the handicap of advancing years.

I have said so much about games that my readers may well think that I am, or was, one of those Head Masters who regard the intellectual progress of their charges as of comparatively small account. That would not be entirely fair: if I have said little about the work of the school it is because it did not notably differ from that of other schools of its type. It is true that I did not introduce any great educational reforms, but I fear that I am not constitutionally a reformer. We won a reasonable amount of scholarships, mainly, of course, classical: but we did enlarge the Darwin Buildings and we had a Modern Side, so we were not altogether obscurantist. Still, I frankly confess that my task at Shrewsbury, as I saw it, was not to flatter the public by worshipping the newer gods, or by inventing new educational deities to worship, but to stimulate its life generally and to restore its self-confidence.

So far as my own work was concerned, in addition

to teaching the Sixth form I taught a good deal of English and Divinity up and down the school, and learnt in the process perhaps as much as I taught. One specimen of my results may possibly be of interest. I had been instructing the Modern Sixth in Divinity and discoursing about religion in the seventeenth century. I used to look over the boys' note-books afterwards, and was appalled to find this entry in the book of the captain of the eleven, "At this time the service of Degradation of the Dead was very common." I cannot imagine what I can have said to suggest so disquieting a possibility.

Something was done to stimulate literary activity in the school: the *Salopian* was transformed from a rare and belated chronicle of athletic events into a readable fortnightly paper which contained a fair proportion of real attempts at literature. I may perhaps allow myself to include a short extract from an attempt by the captain of the school to write characters of the poets of England as members of an imaginary football team—headed *Si Magna licet componere parvis*.

- W. WORDSWORTH (left back) showed some brilliant form early in the season, but soon sank into mediocrity: will not, or cannot, do what he is told.
- J. KEATS (inside right) a really good forward: improved enormously in a very short time, and but for his mishap so early in the season might have become one of the best players on the side.
- S. T. COLERIDGE (inside left) had one or two days of splendid form, but could not be induced to train, and so soon became practically useless.

In the scholarship examinations I used to make a point of giving candidates a chance of showing any ability they might have for writing English verse, and used as a rule to set a couplet as the point from which to start. One year in which I had suggested the opening lines,

I think I know what I would be  
If they would leave the choice to me,

produced the following verses: I think that if it is remembered that they were composed by a boy of thirteen under the conditions of a scholarship examination, it will be agreed that he deserved election.

I think I know what I would be  
If they would leave the choice to me.  
I would, I have no doubt at all,  
Be excellent with bat and ball,  
A cricketer professional  
Like Gunn or Hardstaff, Hobbs or Hitch:  
I really do not quite know which.  
Or I'd be Alletson and hit  
Sixes and watch the fielders flit  
Across the field, and see the ball,  
Flying along, elude them all.  
A two, a three, a six, a four—  
Each over many runs I'd score,  
Until at last a hit would rise  
Higher and higher to the skies.  
"A six! a six!" the crowd would say.  
But every dog must have his day,  
For see! Along the boundary fence  
There runs a man with muscles tense:

He stretches out his hand: the ball  
Into his hand doth swiftly fall:  
He keeps it there, a wondrous catch,  
Which for their side may win the match.  
Or else I would a bowler be,  
The scattered stumps I'd love to see:  
Or umpire's hand uplifted high  
Towards the lovely turquoise sky.  
But oh! how terrible to see  
The umpire gazing straight at me,  
And lifting up his hand say "Out,"  
When I have made precisely nowt.  
(I hope you will excuse this rhyme—  
I'd change it if I had more time.)  
You see, I know what I would be  
If they would leave the choice to me.  
I do not envy a K.C.  
I never would be an M.P.  
Nor would I earn a lawyer's fee:  
A policeman's life; a sailor's free  
Existence I'd not have; you see  
I know what suits me to a T.  
'Tis not to ride the swift gee-gee,  
Nor yet to sail as an A.B.,  
Nor use the editorial "We,"  
But I'd excel with bat and ball  
A cricketer professional.

But it was not always so easy to decide the point. Here, for example, are two answers written by two candidates to the question whether you would rather be a great poet, a great musician or a great painter:

To be a great painter one needs a great deal of money, unless one can get one's pictures to sell during one's lifetime, which does not often occur with the greatest painters as they secrete themselves for most of

their lives, and the paintings only get found after they die. A great poet is almost one of the least expensive professions one can get, of course if one's poems attract the public. Of course the true poet does not worry himself at all about the public opinion. A great musician, of course, has to spend a great deal on a piano, so he is equally handicapped with the others. The works of all three live for ever now that printing has been invented, although before that the musician's work would have lived much longer, on account of the wandering bards and minstrels.

I think I would rather be a good painter, because if you travel at all you could take away pictures of the place you visit as souvenirs.

I would rather be a great poet, because however great the skill of the painter he cannot even with the most superb touch of the brush, even with the most delicate expression can he betray the most secret and inward thoughts of a human being. A great musician cannot even with the most treble voice or the most thundering notes of the bass express the glory of a beautiful face. The musician must turn poet before he can express the joys of love. A poet is a painter, only a painter in words. A poet is a musician, only a musician in words. If a painter was perfect he would be greater than many, if a musician was perfect he would be greater than perhaps many more, but if a poet was perfect he would be greatest of all.

The author of the former had done very creditably in all his classical papers: the author of the latter, aged twelve, had secured practically no marks for any of them; which, if either, would you have elected?

## 3

My friend Mr. Howson of Holt, who thought boys suffered from an overdose of sermons, once appealed to me for sympathy: I could not refrain from saying that we made a point of always having three on a Sunday. It was a pardonable exaggeration, for I have never quite been able to distinguish between a scripture lesson in the real sense of the word and a sermon, and I had introduced the practice of giving a short address at evening chapel. This practice, which I continued at Eton, is based on a theory of the soundness of which I have no sort of doubt. Put briefly, it is that as God is concerned with the whole life of man it is a dangerous heresy to limit His concern to matters of morality and worship: an effort ought to be made to make boys realize that all good acts and all brave deeds, whether done by "religious" people or not, are done by Divine inspiration and are therefore suitable for record in a school chapel: the virtuous acts of sinners, over which angels rejoice, are often much more edifying than the lives of the saints. If we confine ourselves to the latter, we are in danger of inclining the youthful mind to the silly and pernicious theory of Swinburne that vice is really rapturous and rosy and virtue languid: the splendid qualities of a Nelson or a Garibaldi are none the less splendid, or less divine in origin, because the one was a very imperfect moralist and the other a very shaky theologian.

History provides many heroes whose acts speak for themselves, with no need for the moral to be pointed, and boys have a real love of fact. Sometimes the hero may be a missionary like Livingstone, sometimes a soldier like Wellington, sometimes a scientist like Pasteur; there is no need to preach sermons about them, but there is a real need that their good deeds should be known, and God be praised for their excellence.

Nor is it necessary to confine oneself to fact: there are some great stories, such as that of Victor Hugo's Bishop in *Les Misérables*, which every boy has a right to know: Tolstoi has his Cobbler and Dostoievsky his Grand Inquisitor: and none can fail to be moved by Oscar Wilde's story of the Happy Prince. And, as it seems to me, the school chapel is the ideal place in which such stories can be told. I am very conscious of having failed to do justice to my themes—and it is not very easy to compress a great episode or a great character into ten minutes—but nothing will ever persuade me that the attempt is not well worth making.

A hymn written for use at Eton shows the general view of religion and life to which these addresses were intended as a very modest contribution.

Lord of Beauty, Thine the splendour  
Shown in earth and sky and sea,  
Burning sun and moonlight tender,  
Hill and river, flower and tree;  
Lest we fail our praise to render,  
Touch our eyes that we may see!



Lord of Wisdom, Whom obeying  
Mighty waters ebb and flow.  
While unhasting, undelaying,  
Planets on their courses go;  
In Thy laws Thyself displaying,  
Teach our minds Thy Truth to know!

Lord of Life, alone sustaining  
All below and all above,  
Lord of Love, by Whose ordaining  
Sun and stars sublimely move;  
In our earthly spirits reigning,  
Lift our hearts that we may love!

Lord of Beauty, bid us own Thee,  
Lord of Truth, our footsteps guide,  
Till as Love our hearts enthrone Thee,  
And, with vision purified,  
Lord of All, when all have known Thee,  
Thou in all art glorified!

From this custom developed the further practice of producing a fable at definite moments in the school life, such as Confirmation or the end of term. Here again I am as certain that the method is good as I am conscious that in my hands it tended to become monotonous. The true "fabulist" ought to have a much wider range of knowledge than I possess, and to be able to draw his illustrations from a wider field. But there is high warrant for the belief that "truth embodied in a tale" sometimes finds entrance to ears usually deaf, and the fact that *Shrewsbury Fables* continue to sell after twenty years suggests that my belief in the method is not without foundation. The three volumes which succeeded it have been decreas-

ingly popular, which would appear to show that my particular vein was worked out, though, with the usual perversity of authors, I think them slightly superior. But to have been imitated (and, I doubt not, surpassed) by at least one Bishop and two or three Head Masters is quite enough to upset a modest man's power of judgment.

## 4

I hope that I have succeeded in conveying the impression that I was very happy at Shrewsbury, for that was indeed the fact. My happiness was increased by the birth, during my time there, of four of my children: my elder son secured a whole holiday for the school, despite the protests of his mother, an advanced feminist, at such unfair discrimination: I forget whether the protests were renewed when his brother secured, later on, a similar privilege for Eton. I was not troubled by the thought that I had to administer a large boarding house, containing some forty when I went there and some eighty when I left. I know the theoretical objections to such a practice and admit their strength: I will only say that coming as a stranger to a new school I found my position as a house-master invaluable in helping me to know it from the inside. Nor was I perturbed, as one of finer nature would no doubt have been, by the thought that I was making money out of feeding the boys: this may perhaps be explained if I say that my

bankers were at the end of eight years unable to discover that so lamentable a result had in fact occurred. The custom of a house-master being also a hotel-keeper is open to serious objections, and, though the difficulties in altering it are very great, I feel that Head Masters ought to succeed in overcoming them: it is always pleasant (as Lucretius remarked) to suggest from the pavilion how the younger generation ought to play the ball.

And when I say that I was very happy I mean to imply that we were a very happy society: I know of no school (though no doubt they exist and have existed) to which the term "a happy family" could be as fittingly applied as to Shrewsbury in the six years before the war. The school was flourishing in numbers and in repute: the young masters were, as I have said, very remarkable people, and their activities were watched with a very benevolent eye by the Elder Statesmen of the staff.

All seemed to be for the best in the best of worlds, and if three architects, engaged on three different new buildings, happened to choose the same day for their visit, it was possible to keep them from clashing on the wide expanse of Kingsland. A parent walking round the grounds once said to me, "What a wonderful field you have here, Mr. Alington!" Anxious to show how up-to-date we were, I explained that the cricket pitch was just being treated with the newest preparation. It was distressing to us both to find that he was alluding to the spiritual field.

The experience reminds me of another parent who inquired by letter whether our standard in religious matters was High or Low Church, and added that her son was anxious to know whether we played Rugby or Association football. I do not know which part of my answer decided her to send him elsewhere.

And then came the war: I have few more poignant recollections than of taking the salute when the Corps moved off to camp in 1914, though I little knew then how few of those boys were ever to return to Shrewsbury. Our losses were in the same proportion as those of all public schools, and if I say that only one of the boys who had been captains of my house in eight years came safe home that is only an experience which other schoolmasters can parallel.

Shrewsbury was fortunate in one way: when the question of a war memorial was discussed, there was no question that the figure of Sir Philip Sidney, himself a member of the school, was the right choice. His figure with the words "I recognize my school-fellows," strikes the right note. I cannot help contrasting it with Eton's unfortunate excursion into symbolic statuary which, excellent as it is in workmanship, seems never likely to emerge from the darkness of the Provost's entrance hall.

## 5

It was while I was at Shrewsbury that I made my first experiment in authorship. The book, called *A Schoolmaster's Apology*, was published in the autumn of 1914—a very unfortunate moment. It expressed the views which I then held on various educational and religious topics, and I expect that I ought to be ashamed of having changed them so little. From that moment I confess that “the evil habit of writing” took hold of me, and I have published a good many books since of somewhat varied character. I have at times felt doubts whether the fact that it has amused me to write them justified so much waste of paper, but since I have been to America and seen how quickly trees grow I have felt more at ease: if the *Daily Mail* slays its forest weekly, there can be no great harm in my having destroyed an occasional thicket. And, after all, paper, we are told, perishes quickly nowadays, so I feel that posterity's grievance is not as serious as it might have been. I shall attempt later to explain, if not to justify, the existence of some of the books which I have written.

In the spring of 1916 Dr. Lyttelton resigned the Head-Mastership of Eton, partly in deference to a view of his patriotism entirely inconceivable to anyone who knows him, and I was elected in the summer

to succeed him at the end of the year. The situation was a little complicated by the fact that the Mastership of Marlborough was vacant at the same time, and that is the only post which I have sentimentally ever desired to hold. I had been offered it rather soon after I went to Shrewsbury and I had felt then that it would be impossible to leave a work I had just undertaken. That argument did not now apply, but Eton had also very strong claims on my affection, and I have never heard any Marlburian repine at a decision which gave him Dr. Norwood.

I rendered no greater service to Shrewsbury than in suggesting to my Governing Body the name of Canon Sawyer as my successor. He was not an original candidate, which lends point to a story which he delights to tell. Having heard that betting was rife in the school, he made inquiries immediately on his arrival: the only scandal he was able to discover was a large sweepstake on the appointment of the new Head Master. He had been quoted at 15 to 1 as a doubtful starter, and the boy who had drawn him had sold him for eighteen pence. I think Canon Sawyer felt that the culprit had learnt his lesson, and no more was heard of it. On my appointment the master who won a similar competition among the staff defrauded them (I am told) of their promised banquet: it was not for nothing that he was a man of science.

## CHAPTER VIII

### I

WE left Shrewsbury amid some emotion, not, I like to think, entirely one-sided. It was a bracing tonic to read the welcome offered by the *Eton College Chronicle*: it chronicled the appointment of a new Vice-Provost and a new Head Master among the promotions to the Shooting VIII and the winners of some minor aquatic events, adding, "We congratulate these gentlemen on their appointment." I remembered with joy how Ronnie Knox had once written a poem on the right method of greeting a new Head Master, ending with the lines:

Greet him like Etonians without a single word,  
Absolutely silent and indefinitely bored.

I remembered further how when the great Dr. Warre paid his first visit after retirement to plant a ceremonial tree, precisely one Etonian was present at the function. I felt I was coming home.

I do not think that I ever expected to be quite as happy at Eton as I had been at Shrewsbury, and, to be honest, I do not think that I ever was. This is in no sense the fault of Eton: its Head Master has to be more official than elsewhere, and has less opportunity of direct contact with boys: in so large a

society close relations are harder to maintain. His function, if it be not arrogant to say so, is rather to supply "the golden link of the throne" which unites New Zealand to Ulster, and Mr. Brown's house with that of Mr. Green. Nor can any Head Master hope to "recapture the first fine careless rapture" of having a job of his own to do. But all that friendship could accomplish to lighten my task was done from the first, and I doubt if any Head Master has, in more than sixteen years, had less friction with his governors or his colleagues.

It would be silly to suggest that the pomp and circumstance surrounding a Head Master of Eton do not make some appeal to the natural man, though it may be to his sense of humour that they sometimes appeal. It was pleasant to be described in Georgia as "Head Master of a school upwards of a thousand years old and Pastor to the Royal Family," and if the description was a little highly coloured, so was the audience in a negro school. It was the latter title to fame which elicited the remark of a charming coloured lady in Kentucky who, as she brushed my dress trousers, exclaimed, "Well, I never did think I'd get that near to King George of England!"

Another American paper produced a picture of me with the legend, "Trains Kings at Eton," and though that can hardly be regarded as my normal activity, I owe to Eton not only an honorary D.D. degree (hotly opposed by purists with whom I have every sympathy), but some official connection with



Royalty. In my capacity of chaplain to His Majesty, I chanced to have the opportunity of seeing him on two very interesting occasions, one on the Sunday of the General Strike, and the other on his return to Windsor after his illness. On the former occasion I was able to realize how wisely and calmly His Majesty summed up the situation, and on the latter to hear him testify that in the days of his great weakness he felt that he was being held up by the prayers of his people.

To those who have any knowledge of Their Majesties, I need not add that they filled to perfection the exacting rôle of "parent."

Pomp and circumstance have their disadvantages, and I was by no means the only person to find that a fixed income, however large on paper, does not respond with any elasticity to large increases both in taxation and in the expense of maintaining a decent standard of hospitality. That is of course entirely a private affair: but if I have any grievance against Old Etonians as a body it is that they seem constitutionally incapable of realizing the heavy sacrifices made by Eton masters as a whole to prevent the expenses of the school from rising. It is no small thing to be able to say that the cost of an Eton education is no higher than it was before the war: I doubt if any other school can say as much, and as I know better than anyone what this result cost my colleagues I think I have the right to ask that they should get some credit for it. But many Etonians, like all good

Englishmen, like to believe that the affairs of any institution in which they are interested, whether it be a school or a nation, are directed by individuals who, though probably not corrupt, are at least almost criminal in their incompetence.<sup>1</sup>

Following out the suggestion of one of the Prime Minister's Committees on Education, the Provost and Fellows in my time decided that all scholarships at Eton should be of a fixed value, capable of being liberally augmented in case of need. So liberal has been this augmentation that there are several boys in College whose parents pay nothing towards either their board or education, while various benefactions have made it possible to help a really poor boy still further, with grants for unusual expenses. The result is that it is possible for the poorest of boys to receive an Eton education for practically nothing.

I am sure that this was a very wise decision: if it is objected that a really poor boy may not be able to qualify for admission, the answer is that that is not Eton's fault: the best way in which the public schools can help a clever boy is by refusing to allow that certain subjects, such as Latin and Greek, are reserved for the rich, and by encouraging teachers to believe that for a boy of real promise, whether in

<sup>1</sup> This sentiment is, of course, by no means official, nor is it publicly expressed: and I must apologize to Old Etonians if in my attempts to explore the subconscious I have erred either against propriety or against truth. Psychology is notoriously a tricky subject.

languages or in mathematics, the path to the University will be as smooth as they can make it.

Head Masters, like other people, find that, while they get their fair share both of credit and of abuse, they are almost invariably bestowed on the wrong occasions. The hardest things one has to do are not of a nature to win applause, which comes in excessive measure for performances which have cost little effort. It works out very fairly on the whole: and Herodotus was as wise as usual when he said that if everyone put their grievances in the middle and were offered the chance of an exchange, most people would prefer to pick up their own particular bundle.

But to have been allowed to serve so great an institution is in itself sufficient reward, and I should be ungrateful indeed if my first thoughts were not of generations of boys and masters among whom I number some of the best of friends: of a very delightful house in which to bring up a family, and of countless kindnesses from young and old, which took the bitterness out of any failures and overpaid any success.

## 2

As I may seem, in my account of Shrewsbury days, to have passed rather lightly over things educational, I will put in the forefront the educational changes which were made in my time at Eton.

The first was a reorganization of the work of the

school for boys before and after taking the School Certificate. This was not particularly original, but it does, as it seems to me, provide a sensible curriculum, enabling boys to specialize in part before that examination, and completely when it is past. On paper, at any rate, the safeguards against "complete" specialization being as one-sided as it sounds are quite adequate.

I deal later on with the persistent and preposterous belief that the ancient schools are still predominantly classical.

The second change on which I am disposed to pride myself was the encouragement given to Greek. Since Dr. Warre's days Greek had most unfortunately become the classical Cinderella: German threatened it from before and handicraft from behind. I remember the case of a boy who, allowed to drop Greek for carpentry, returned in a brief period to his classical instructor with his hand in a sling. Handicraft punishes inaccuracy more sharply than the classics.

It was clear that if nothing was done Greek would tend, through parental indolence, to disappear: on the other hand it was obvious that, for boys of any literary ability, this would be a disaster. It was laid down that all boys judged by us to fall into this class, *must* do Greek for two years after leaving the fourth form: steps were taken to secure that they got adequate time for the study, and the results were satisfactory. Even if a boy did not know the alphabet

when he began, we succeeded in giving him a bowing acquaintance with Homer, Herodotus and Aristophanes before he finished: and if, when he had to choose a classical language for the School Certificate, he preferred Greek to Latin, he was allowed to follow his preference.

It has always seemed to me strange that the Universities have shown so little interest in this topic: historians attach, as I think, undue importance to a boy's proficiency in Latin, as enabling him to read the chronicles in the original. Any boy who is fit to do so with profit can recover the necessary Latin in a very short period, and for him to have been introduced to the glories of Greek literature is a quite undeniable gain. I feel that the possibility of entering Oxford or Cambridge with a knowledge of Greek instead of Latin ought to be more widely known, and the practice more generally encouraged.

This is perhaps the right place at which to discuss the respective merits of the two languages as educational instruments, and I wish to rank myself as a whole-hearted champion of Greek. There is no need for me to demonstrate the superiority of Greek literature as a whole, but what is usually forgotten is that it is, speaking generally, a far easier literature both to learn and to appreciate. When once the obstacle of the alphabet has been surmounted the comparative simplicity of Greek constructions compares very favourably with those of Latin. There must be some mysterious quality about Latin prose,

for no schoolmasters really know why boys who learn it so long write it with such incredible atrocity: Greek prose in comparison is easy, which is only one way of saying that it is a better language.

This may be matter of controversy, but there can be no dispute that the rewards of learning it are far more obvious to the beginner. It takes a ripe scholarship really to appreciate Virgil or Tacitus: the eloquence of Cicero makes no appeal to those without literary taste: Horace is a difficult author: the dexterity of Ovid is more remarkable than his poetic feeling: and Cæsar has to be read in bulk to be enjoyed. There are hardly any Latin authors of the classical period whom the young student can be expected to enjoy.

How different is the case when we turn to Greek! Homer and Herodotus supply not only great literature, but literature of a type enjoyable by anyone who can appreciate the meaning of words. Aristophanes is not only the greatest of humorists, but as a rule the most perspicuous of writers, and the Greek prose extracts collected in *Sertum* (an Eton school book now incredibly out of print) are of a kind to delight master and pupil alike. No sane schoolmaster could, as it seems to me, hesitate which literature he would prefer to teach to boys of tolerable intelligence but no literary ability.

As I shall say later on, it is this great class of the "average boy" which has been so strangely neglected in our ordinary education: and what is

true of him is infinitely truer of boys with any literary taste. If they are only to learn one classical language I suggest in the name of humanity—in every sense of that great word—that the language ought certainly to be Greek.

Holding these views, it was inevitable that I should make some effort to put them into practice. I suggested to my Eton colleagues that Greek should take the place of Latin as the normal classical language, Latin being taken in addition by those who wished to do so. No alteration was suggested in the curriculum of preparatory schools, where all boys would get a grounding of Latin, and the more intelligent might, if their preceptors saw fit, make a start at Greek: we should teach Greek to everyone, and Latin later on to those of literary ability.

The opposition was strong, and, I need not say, intelligent: it is probable that Eton with its long tradition of Latin verse was the worst place at which to suggest so radical a change, and many very competent teachers felt an affection for Horace as a school book for the young that I am quite unable to share. Almost the whole Eton world was against Athanasius, and Athanasius against it, but I must confess that, unlike the saint, I had not the ultimate courage of my convictions. To use a less ambitious parallel, I was, like the Red Queen, "good enough but not strong enough," and the opportunity was lost. I still regret it, and feel that my "great refusal" meant a real loss to English education.

I wish that Mr. Gladstone could have been alive, to support my feeble efforts. I should have liked to have got him to come down to Eton and to proclaim, as he did in a lecture given there in 1891, "if the purpose of education be to fit the human mind for the efficient performance of the greatest functions, the ancient culture, and above all the Greek culture, is by far the best and strongest, the most lasting and the most elastic instrument that could possibly be applied to it."

I know that it is said that a knowledge of Latin is of greater use to the student of modern languages, and no doubt that is true: but on my system everyone would have known enough to recognize the commoner words, and that is about as far as the average boy ever gets. Most of our educational system rests on a gross over-estimate of his capacity.

I would not be thought for a moment to disparage Latin: I happen to be a passionate admirer of several of the authors whom I have mentioned, but my admiration came late: so I believe it would always come to a boy interested in literature. The real question is not what is to be done with him, but whether we are to acquiesce in the average boy never really liking, or whole-heartedly enjoying, anything classical at all.



## 3

Another change which I introduced was less controversial, but was based on a principle at least equally important. I received a catalogue from some publishers advertising an edition of "Genesis to Esther—the parts usually read in schools," and when I meditated on this truly shocking indictment I could not deny its truth. Publishers have a way of putting their finger on the weak spot: I remember some maps on a large scale which indicated the principal cities by large blobs: underneath was written, "Names invisible to the class, but clearly visible to the teacher," and then, in inverted commas, "Just the maps that were wanted."

There was no doubt about it: Genesis to Esther *did* comprise most of the Old Testament usually studied in schools: I even remembered that at Eton in old days the Book of Judges was read twice by small students, on the theory that Lower boys were naturally pugnacious. And yet, when one came to think of it, the practice was clearly indefensible. Much of the Old Testament history is no better, and some of it a good deal worse, than the early history of Greece and Rome, while at the same time that incomparable book contains the story of how the Jews advanced in the knowledge of God, until, in His providence, they had laid a foundation on which Christ could build. How much of this could find

place in a curriculum which omitted the Prophets and the Psalmists and insisted on a minute acquaintance with the campaigns of Joshua, or the extremely one-sided narratives of Kings and Chronicles?

To ask the question was to answer it: I could find no book which suited my purpose, and, greatly daring, compiled one myself: it was called *Why We Read the Old Testament*, and its object was to ensure that no boy should leave Eton without at least knowing how its Head Master would answer that question. It was very short and contained nothing original, but it did provide that in two series of lessons a boy should have at least some knowledge of what Amos and Hosea had to teach, and of the treasures of literature and religion to be found in the Psalmists, Isaiah and Job. Someone else might very easily write a much better book, but I am absolutely certain that the principle is sound.

Few things are more lamentable than that, in an age when Bible reading is more and more neglected, the only parts of the book with which millions are familiar are precisely those which have no religious value. Everyone knows that Jonah was swallowed by a whale: everyone knows that Balaam's ass spoke: everyone knows that the walls of Jericho fell down flat: our teaching panders to the human prejudice for facts, and the facts as supplied are often not only fictions but fictions which, if unexplained, create a definite prejudice against the honesty of religion.

It is pathetic that the Book of Jonah, one of the

most spiritual in the Old Testament, should be mainly known as a stumbling-block: and pathetic that we should pride ourselves on having discovered the falsity of a literal meaning which the authors never intended their words to bear. The man who complains that skylarks *are* birds, whatever Shelley may say, and are not in the least like "glow-worms golden" is on a level with many of the literalist critics of the Old Testament.

But it is impossible to blame them as long as we persist in concealing from our pupils the obvious truth that we read the Old Testament not to learn science, not to study the political history of two small tribes, not to admire blindly the actions of individual patriarchs, but to see how the age-long purpose of God was fulfilled, and how a nation of religious genius came slowly but surely into the knowledge of Him. The Old Testament is a very difficult book to teach, but the task can hardly be begun until we have a clearer idea of why we read it.

My readers may be tired of a sermon, though it is one which I do not apologize for preaching. Let me reward them by a few examples of teaching misunderstood. The spoken word leads to many misunderstandings, or a candidate for entrance to Eton would not have stated the obvious truth that it was easier for "an eagle to go into a camel's eye" than for a rich man to enter heaven: it was a Royal Prince who endeavoured to emend scripture by declaring that "a certain man drew a bow at a vulture": we

cannot claim him as an Etonian, but it was an Eton boy who when asked to give an illustration of our Lord's attitude towards women replied "He commended the action of the mother who threw her two small children into the Treasury."

While on the subject of such verbal misunderstandings, I cannot refrain from recording that a brother-in-law of mine when he attended church as a boy and heard Banns of Marriage read was much perplexed as to the elusive identity of George Augustus Pediment, who seemed to be in such general demand.

## 4

There is a general agreement among theorists that the age normally selected for Confirmation for boys of the public school type is the worst conceivable: some hold that the ceremony should take place at the preparatory school, when the boy is prepared to accept without question what he is told: others that we should wait for the period when his mental faculties are more fully developed and he will be able fully to comprehend the answers. As so often happens, the theorists have an unanswerable case, but I am not myself satisfied that the normal practice is not the wisest.

Of course many boys are confirmed without real thought on their part, but no age will guarantee intelligent attention: of course many are confirmed

with difficulties unsolved, but if we are to wait till faith has vanished into sight we can abolish the service altogether. So much criticism is launched at public school preparation for Confirmation that it is perhaps worth while to state, if not to defend, the Eton practice. Boys are prepared primarily by their tutors, or, if they are unwilling to undertake the task, or the parents have other wishes, by a master, or other teacher, of the parents' choice: in addition, the Head Master, or someone appointed by him, gives addresses to the whole body of candidates for the eight or ten weeks of preparation. The numbers at Eton, approaching two hundred every year, make these addresses more formal than might be wished, and there is the additional difficulty that boys differ so vastly in intelligence, and in religious upbringing, that it is very difficult to speak appropriately to all at once: some are already troubled by problems which others will encounter much later, if at all: some have the priceless advantage of coming from really religious homes: others are grotesquely ignorant of the elements of religious knowledge.

To meet this difficulty, in my later years at Eton I compiled a small book called *Christian Outlines* for each boy to possess: he was not compelled to read it, any more than masters were compelled to make use of it in their ministrations: but it was at least an attempt to supply a coherent view of the faith and to give the best answer I could to some of the more obvious questions. By the charity of my successor

(on whom be peace!) the practice has been continued since my departure.

In addition the Head Master used to see the candidates from each house by themselves: this was a compromise between the ideal plan of seeing each boy separately and that of seeing them all together. I tried the former for a brief period but found it impossible to provide enough time for a shy boy to overcome his natural timidity: if he did so, another was inevitably knocking at the door before anything profitable could be said on either side. *Confirmatio optimi pessima*, a cynical friend of mine used to say, meaning thereby that the preparation of even the nicest boys is a very considerable strain.

I am not concerned to suggest that our methods were perfect: I am very conscious that they failed both in idea and execution, but at any rate they represented an honest effort to do our best.<sup>1</sup>

I cannot leave this part of my subject without a word of the voluntary services which boys were very ready to attend: those held during the war were unforgettable: and it was a very moving sight to see College Chapel crowded on an evening in Holy Week by a congregation attending entirely of their own free will.

<sup>1</sup> Preparation for Confirmation has difficulties and humours of its own. I remember a boy who on the eve of his Confirmation asked me if it was necessary to believe everything in the Creeds: I pulled myself together, expecting to be confronted with some difficult task of discrimination, and was relieved when he said that he was not at all sure that he believed "World without end."

Whatever may be the arguments for a fixed Easter, schools would certainly be the losers by its institution: it would be a great strain to have every Holy Week and Easter at school, but I have no doubt that it is occasionally desirable, and that a good many boys can more easily be led to realize the greatness of the season under the conditions which school affords than under those of the modern home.

## 5

I am conceited enough to think that, though, like Nanki Poo, I am no musician, I was able to render a very practical service to the cause of music at Eton. The charge previously made for music lessons was put into the inclusive fee, which seemed to me an obvious piece of justice. As the inclusive fee at Eton is really inclusive and covers practically everything that a boy can wish to learn or do, it would have been ridiculous to treat music or drawing as curious eccentricities to be pursued by boys whose parents could afford the luxury. I humbly—or do I mean proudly?—commend Eton's example to other public schools. It is not for me to say what proportion of boys can be profitably taught to play an instrument, but I am sure that financial considerations should not enter into the question. Almost all boys can certainly be taught a little drawing, and under the hands of that artist and oarsman of genius, Eric Powell, all who had any taste were encouraged to develop it. I should like to add a word of the value of a hall for temporary exhibi-

tions of artistic objects, such as we were fortunate enough to secure at Eton: I say "temporary" because if a school is known to possess a gallery its friends are apt to embarrass it with dull portraits of dull people for which they have no wall space. In the same way, most school museums suffer from the gift of assegais which may very well be poisoned and are, in the opinion of their donors, safer out of the house. In the case of such gifts the school authorities have need to remember Mrs. Green's famous definition of tact as "meaning one thing and saying another keeferful."

If I seem to have dwelt at undue length on the things which I may claim to have accomplished, I hope that no one will suppose that I am unconscious of things left undone. I am well aware that a book, certainly longer and possibly more entertaining, could be compiled to tell of my culpable omissions. All Head Masters, being human, have blind spots, and that is, no doubt, why a merciful Providence ordains that they should grow old at a reasonable pace and retire at a reasonable time. It may not be true that every assistant master carries a birch in his knapsack, but, at least, if he suffers from the follies of his superiors he can find comfort in the spirit of the ancient rhyme:

Learn as fast as thou may and can,  
For our Bishop is an old man,  
And therefore thou must learn fast  
If thou wilt be Bishop when he is past.



## 6

Of Eton athletics during my Head-Mastership there is little I need say. We have mercifully escaped in England the unhappy fate of some American schools and universities by which the appointment of an athletic coach has become an important academic duty. Americans are in danger of putting the prize before the game, and their love of professionalism has had its revenge in giving them a race of professional politicians. In most English schools the saner tradition prevails that while masters may help, by precept, and if possible by example, it is no part of their duty to control. At Eton this was carried to such a point that I believe Mr. Wells, the great cricketer, had solemnly to be invited every day to attend at the nets, and I tremble to think of what would have happened had anyone called him "the cricket master."

I share with him the honour of being an honorary member of the Eton Ramblers: when my name was suggested it was reasonably objected that I had done very little for Eton cricket. An ex-president of the M.C.C. retorted that if I *had* done anything it would either have been wrong, or at any rate been thought to be wrong, and his logic proved irresistible. But I did do one service to Eton cricket by singing the story of its great match in 1928: I reprint the lines partly because they gave me the opportunity of paying a

well-deserved compliment to Harrow sportsmanship: it should be added that earlier in that week Oxford had been saved from defeat by the stubborn resistance of an Etonian.

*Lord's, 1928*

Lord's—Lord's—on Wednesday evening!  
 Cambridge fieldsmen crowding round,  
 Oxford's hardly a chance of saving it—  
 Hardly a chance, but still you found  
 Elderly cricketers gnawing their sticks,  
 Blameless bishops, forgetful of Jix,  
 Publicly praying at half-past six,  
 And prayers and curses arose from the Mound  
 On that head of carrots (or possibly gold)  
 With a watchful eye on each ball that's bowled—  
 And a deadly silence around the ground.

Lord's—Lord's on Friday evening!  
 Two men out and an hour to play—  
 Lose another, and that's the end of it,  
 Why not call it a harrowing day?  
 Harrow's lips are at last on the cup,  
 Harrow's tail unmistakably up,  
 And Eton? Eton can only pray  
 For a captain's heart in a captain's breast,  
 And some decent batting among the rest,  
 And sit and shiver and hope for the best—  
 If those two fellows can only stay!

Stay they did—can we ever forget it?—  
 Till those who had bidden us all despair  
 Lit their pipes with a new assurance,  
 Toyed instead with the word "declare":  
 Harrow's glorious hours begin,  
 Harrow's batsmen hurrying in,  
 One and all with the will to win,

Cheers and counter-cheers rend the air!  
 Harrow's down with her colours flying,  
 Great in doing and great in dying,  
 Eton's home with a head to spare!

I have another reason for being interested in those verses, because they represent one of the three or four occasions in my life when I have felt absolutely compelled to break into rhyme. Mr. Housman has described the feeling (though I think he connects it with beer) and, without in any way challenging comparison with him, I can testify to the severity and unexpectedness of the compulsion. Perhaps it is all the more remarkable when the result is inadequate: but there it is, and I know what Tennyson meant by saying that he sang because he must.

The verses in which I fell into the habit of saluting masters on their retirement must be differently explained: a charitable colleague took the view that they were written in the hope that the prospect of being so celebrated might induce them to postpone their departure. The best of them are perhaps those which commemorate the passing from Eton to Trinity of a very distinguished scholar whose foible was imperturbability:

He who thinks  
 To confound our Eton Sphinx  
 Might as well be bowling Hobbs  
 lobs.

He who tries  
 His composure to surprise  
 Might as fitly challenge Len-  
 glen.

## 7

Let me turn from my personal achievements or failures to say a few words about some distinguished Eton figures.

When I came back to Eton, Dr. Warre, though very feeble in health, was still Provost: it was a very interesting but alarming experience to discuss Eton affairs over his sick-bed. Of his eightieth birthday I have two curious recollections: the first is of the presentation of a Latin address from the staff which I had to read to him: just as I was going to begin, Mr. Broadbent, who, as senior assistant master, was present with the Vice-Provost, said in a loud whisper, "*Old* pronunciation: he likes that best," and I endeavoured to obey.<sup>1</sup>

My other recollection is more interesting: he had received many letters of congratulation, including one from the President of Magdalen, Sir Herbert Warren, expressed with much felicity, and paying him compliments which verged on exaggeration. Dr. Warre gave it me to read, and then told me to read it

<sup>1</sup> The address had its pitfalls: it contained the phrase "*quodcunque spatium vitæ Deus Optimus Maximus tibi concessurus sit*"—or was it *est*?—there had been a passionate argument between my two supporters as to the propriety of the word. I thought that a classical controversy would amuse Dr. Warre, and began relating it before I realized that, as the point of issue was whether he could reasonably be expected to live out the day, he could hardly be expected to enjoy it.

aloud. I did so, with some embarrassment, while he listened with his eyes closed. At the end he said in a voice far stronger than was usual with him then, "Give God the praise!" I value that recollection of a great and humble man.

Of his successor, Dr. James, it is hard to speak. I have praised him so often in verse that I do not wish to strain his friendship by doing it again in prose. I think I will rather quote some of the better verses I have composed in his honour: Sir Austen Chamberlain did me the honour of liking some other lines on the same subject, but then Sir Austen says that the Provost does *The Times* crossword in three minutes and a half, which is demonstrably untrue. The occasion of them was the dedication of a volume of Eton verse.

O highest of Eton officials!  
 O student and scholar and sage!  
 I steal your auspicious initials  
 To grace an Etonian page,  
 For *quicquid agunt Etonenses*,  
 Whatever Etonians do,  
 Though others it often incenses,  
 Finds charity, Provost, from you.

Obscure and illegible charters,  
 Miss Milligan, abbeys and art,  
 State criminals, murderers, martyrs,  
 Are dear to your Catholic heart;  
 Courts know your knee-breeches and buckles,  
 The public your *flair* for a ghost,  
 But ah! your inaudible chuckles  
 Appeal to your intimates most!

In speech you can skilfully season  
With salt any butter you spread :  
Your reading surpasses all reason :  
Your writing can rarely be read :  
From cheap and ephemeral fiction  
You learn (it appears) to compose  
In fine and appropriate diction  
A stately liturgical prose.

From Handel or Daniel or Dickens  
You turn to piquet and a pipe,  
Or hatch intellectual chickens  
Of ev'ry conceivable type,  
Or patiently seek to unravel  
The deeds of the Provosts of yore,  
Rous, Westbury, Lupton and Savile,  
Godolphin and Wotton and Warre.

From these and from similar labours,  
If ever a moment be free,  
You turn to be kind to your neighbours,  
And one in particular—me :  
Your attitude makes me so bold as  
To offer—for better or worse—  
A book which can only be sold as  
Some Head-Magisterial verse.

It would be impertinent for me to praise his encyclopædic knowledge, or that erudition which despises the aid of a dictionary. No doubt he saves some time by the cursory attention which he gives to the news of the day, as recorded in the public press. This sometimes leads to trouble: Edward Wood, when recently appointed Viceroy of India, sent him a telegram about his son's entry for Eton, and must have been surprised to receive a somewhat petulant

postcard written as to a rather impertinent stranger and addressed, "— Irwin, Esq."

A small Etonian, breakfasting with me, once alluded to "James, the writer of ghost stories": in my best pedagogic manner I remarked, "We usually call him the Provost." "Oh, sir," he said, with an engaging smile, "one does say 'Shakespeare,' doesn't one?" And there I will leave the matter.

Frank Rawlins, the Vice-Provost at the time of my return, was a great scholar, a very wise man of affairs, and the kindest-hearted of men. No praise can be too great for the manner in which he bore his disappointment at not being chosen to succeed Dr. Warre, or for the loyalty with which he served his successful rival. During the Provost's illness he really ruled over Eton, and it was with his connivance that I was able for the first time to light the candles on the magnificent altar which Tom Carter had designed as part of the South African War Memorial. The excuse we made to Dr. Warre—a true one—was that it was very dark at early service: they have since glowed with an uncontroversial radiance over Even-song.

His death was a great loss to Eton, but it made room for the promotion of Hugh Macnaghten, the most unselfish of men and the truest friend, haunted at the end of his days by the amazing belief that he was selfish and insincere. He was always seeking for the kind thing to say or to do: the only trouble

was that, if he praised you for anything you had done, you had an uneasy feeling that he might be doing penance for having harboured the uncharitable thought that you had really done rather poorly. But no schoolmaster ever loved boys more, or was more loved by them.

He and the Provost were as unlike one another as two Etonians of precisely similar training could well be: both wrote books about Eton, and neither could endure to read the other's work, for Hugh thought Monty frivolous and Monty knew Hugh to be sentimental. The one went to bed very late and rose as late as decency permitted: the other retired soon after dusk, and was up with the lark, and I need hardly say that it was the early riser who was the more uncharitable in his judgment of his colleague's idiosyncrasies. There is profound wisdom in the saying of the Book of Proverbs, "He that blesseth his neighbour with a loud voice rising up early in the morning it shall be counted a curse to him."

If I do not say much of the three Lower Masters who did so much to save my life and my reputation while I was at Eton it is because I have deliberately refrained from speaking of my contemporaries. They know my gratitude, and any future historian of Eton will give them, and pre-eminently Allen Ramsay, the first of them, the credit for recreating the life of Lower Chapel and for their services to the boy scouts. Personally I have less qualifications for



boy-scout-hood than anyone I know, but I admire it deeply from afar, and am illegitimately proud to think that Eton was almost, if not quite, the first of the larger public schools to run a troop of its own.

The Fellows of Eton have reclaimed their old title instead of the modern designation of Governing Body and in defiance of the old line: Worth makes the man, the want of it the fellow.

Of their body, Lord Rosebery was the most distinguished: he was one of the most loyal of Etonians, and to enable him to continue to qualify for membership of the body it used sometimes to meet at his house in Berkeley Square. He was a generous benefactor to the school and endowed a history scholarship, in connection with which a characteristic episode occurred. He asked me whether the endowment was adequate, and I suggested that a further £200 would provide for the payment to the examiner. He sent a cheque for £2,000: his attention was called to the discrepancy, and I have in my scrapbook the reply in which he said that he thought a good round sum would be better than a fraction.

Another benefaction in my time had a curious sequel: an Old Etonian left the residue of his estate to be divided between Eton and his college boat club. There was good evidence that he expected this to amount to a few hundreds: it was in fact about £40,000. Eton built some schoolrooms with its

share, but has never been able to make up its mind whether he is technically to be regarded as a benefactor: perhaps he should be described as a benefactor *per accidens*, like the man in the old Greek story who, while aiming at a jackdaw, succeeded in killing his neighbour's mother-in-law.

## 8

The war, of course, overshadowed my first two years at Eton: I will not attempt to describe what it meant except to say that the chapel was crowded every week at a voluntary intercession service, and that the reading of the weekly casualty lists thereat was an experience never to be forgotten.

Let me rather pick from my scrapbook a few illustrations of its happier side. Besides a great many Etonian telegrams sent on the Fourth of June from all parts of the front, it contains the *menu* of the Eton dinner held at Bagdad on June 4th, 1917, with the signatures of those present, including Sir Stanley Maude: a telegram, in answer to one of congratulation in November of the same year, ending *Floreat Etona pereant barbari Byng*: and a message sent by a handful of Eton boys to His Majesty on the news of the Armistice, and taken with undue gravity by the Lord Chamberlain: "250 Eton boys respectfully beg Your Majesty to grant us a holiday so that we can march to Buckingham

Palace to greet you. We want to see the fun too.  
*Floreat Etona.*"

It also contains a hymn called *Father, bless our Soldiers*, with an interesting emendation in the last verse: as printed it ran:

Pardon those who hate us,  
Grant us good success,  
Send, when it shall please Thee,  
Peace with righteousness.

The author evidently feared that the first line might not be in keeping with national sentiment, and therefore substituted "Guide and guard our airmen" which, though metrically identical, strikes a somewhat different note. We did not use that hymn, but I am glad to remember that, when the French turned again in 1918, we did play the Marseillaise in College Chapel, to the scandal of purists like Mr. Luxmoore.

All the other memories, sacred and profane, which cluster for me round Eton Chapel, are too numerous to describe in detail, nor are the sacred ones suitable for description in such a work as this. As for the profane, I treasure most the memory of the master of old who, having said in a sermon that he bowed his head in shame when the Athanasian creed was used, was carefully watched by the boys to see that he fulfilled his contract: of the master, alleged to blush in a self-conscious manner whenever the choir sang the anthem "Where shall Wisdom be found?": of the leader of Oppidan Sixth Form,

who missed the turn to his seat, and walked in stately manner out at the north door: or of how the enemy of mankind, disguised as a small black cat, entered the chapel when the Master of Trinity was to preach, and long eluded Mr. Luxmoore's pursuit.

## 9

When the war was over, Eton life settled down into that routine which is so familiar to all who know the place: they would not thank me for describing it, and those who are unfamiliar with the school will prefer to retain their illusions that it is a place where no one does any work, and that beneath its bigot spires and Tory towers

Grateful science still adores  
The aristocracy,

while the rich student exerts a sinister domination over boy and master alike. But there were many pleasant episodes, and many interesting visitors: royalty and commoner, Englishman and foreigner: King Albert of Belgium, who embarrassed me by removing his military headgear when I refused to keep on my top-hat in his presence: his son King Leopold, who does not forget his affection for his old school: King Fuad, who inspected a guard of honour, received and replied to an address, visited the principal buildings, had tea and was off in forty minutes: King Feisal, who talked much the same kind of French that I talk myself, and went

away in the hat of a master who had been asked to meet him at luncheon: Prince Hirohito, who little knew that as my small son bowed to present him with a bouquet the one button on which his sky-blue tights depended exploded and fell to earth with a sickening thud: the Italian plenipotentiary to whom I had to try to explain the Field Game in Italian: Shaukut Ali, who told the Political Society that he knew how to play Mr. Gandhi's googly: the Greek prelates, whose guide thought the English would be more likely to be interested in the Bishop of Sebastopol than in those of Jerusalem or Bethlehem<sup>1</sup>: the Siamese prince who said that the princeling in his charge had come to Eton "to be sup-pressed" and whose A.D.C. refused tea on the ground that he was trying "to reduce ze stout": Lord Balfour, who, when unveiling a tablet in Chapel, told me that he found it hard to speak in a building where there could be no applause to show the speaker how he was getting on: Mr. Montagu Norman, whom I took for M. Coué: Lord Fisher, who talked to the Sixth Form on Faith: Sir George Higginson, who gave an admirable address to the same body after his hundredth birthday and said that that visit to Eton was the happiest day of his life: the present Lord Chancellor, who insisted on singing "Love's Old Sweet Song" as a trio with the late Lord Antrim and

<sup>1</sup> I take pride in recalling that I once drank *crème de menthe* with the last named prelate in his see-city, at the top of a tower built by Justinian.

me on a Sunday afternoon: or the Master of Sempill who gave me the opportunity of establishing an unbreakable air record by being the first person to fly in a cap and gown.

## 10

If I were asked what was the most embarrassing moment of my Eton life I should be in some doubt what to answer. It was not when I was hissed by a small section of the school at a concert because of an imaginary grievance about Long Leave, for I thought in my pride that the noise was that of well-wishers preparing the way for my stately entrance: perhaps it was the moment when Mr. Gandhi arrived to stay with me unexpectedly, accompanied by a secretary, two European sympathizers and a couple of detectives. Or perhaps the Sunday evening in winter when all the lights went out in College Chapel and we had to finish the service with six candles: but that situation was retrieved by the admirable behaviour of the boys. After giving them an address (it was on the death of the Tsar, and the tragic story gained from its surroundings) I was about to tell them that they could sing the hymn "The day Thou gavest," as they would all know it by heart: luckily I remembered in time that the second line runs:

The darkness falls at Thy behest,  
which would have been trying them too high.

But there were some awkward moments of another kind when it became obvious that the lecturer whom I had got down to address First Hundred at its weekly meeting either had nothing to say or, a more frequent occurrence, had much too much.

The most glorious moment of my life was probably when I found myself being addressed with real respect by Lord Curzon, who had a high regard for all constituted authority and especially for that of a Head Master of Eton. (I should like to quote again here the result of my researches into the records of "Pop," which show that at the age of seventeen he said in the course of a speech on India, "By a policy of force we can make Indians fear us: by a policy of justice we can make Indians respect us: but it is only by a policy of flattery and gewgaws that we can make Indians love us," which seems to me an amazingly prophetic utterance for the creator of the great Durbar. I am far from suggesting that that was his greatest service to India.) But there was another great moment in my career when, having taken a boy to Lord's to see a Test match, I was greeted in familiar and even affectionate terms by the three members of the Selection Committee, one after the other: I never knew anyone's shares appreciate so rapidly as did mine in my pupil's eyes.

Another great moment was when I was invited in my official capacity to become a Trustee of *The Times* (but as I was, very reasonably, deposed next

day, the gleam of glory was but transitory): yet another, when the Amateur Racket Champions, our quondam pupils, inspired no doubt by filial piety, or by that respect for the aged which is so gratifying a feature of modern life, allowed the Eton professional and me to beat them at Rackets.

## II

I forget who was the great thinker who observed in disgust, "You seem to think being just" (or was it "being honest"?) "is as easy as Blind Man's Buff." It is very difficult indeed to administer justice fairly, and to attempt to do so is one of the hardest of a Head Master's tasks: I would only ask any Etonian pupils of mine who may think that I failed them in this respect to forgive me as wholeheartedly as a Salopian whom I whipped for a crime he had not committed. I met him the other day and we agreed that no other decision was possible in view of the superb perjury of the real criminal—a boy with a positive genius for untruthfulness.

A Head Master is confronted with many cases of abnormality where the ordinary laws of justice seem not to apply, and he would do well to have in reserve an expert whom he trusts, to consult when need demands. I am not myself a great believer in psycho-analysis, but I should certainly never without its aid have discovered that a boy suffered from a complex which forced him to steal spectacle-cases on



Tuesdays. In this case I have reason to believe that the diagnosis was accurate, but a colleague of mine had less reason for satisfaction. He consulted a psycho-analyst and was rather annoyed to find that his dreams were interpreted as showing a desire to marry, or alternatively to murder, his mother-in-law. But he had one dream still unexplained, and when he told the expert that he had dreamt the night before that his cook had given birth to a zebra, he left the consulting-room with the honours of war.

## 12

On the last Sunday before Advent the more intelligent of the congregation in Eton Chapel look with reverent interest to see whether the Provost will blush when he reads the passage "of making many books there is no end." I should have far more reason to blush than he, for I have "made" nearly as many, and with far less justification. The reader may think he has already heard too much of them, but there are two excursions into the field of literature of rather different types which I should like to record: one was destined to be repeated, the other remains pathetically unique.

In 1922 I published a short novel called *Strained Relations*. Begun originally to amuse a house-party, it has continued to amuse me, and some of them, ever since: perhaps the best thing about it is a quotation

on the cover from an imaginary old play, contributed by the Provost of Eton: "Our relations are becoming strained,' as the Grand Inquisitor said when he put his wife's uncle on the rack." When the book was published in America, a country which speaks of relations as "relatives," it was called *Through the Shadows*—a distressing change to an author who had always thought it a rather sunny little book.

I have written other novels since, and if the fact calls for justification I would only say that when one is really tired there is no greater relaxation than to pursue some imaginary characters of one's own creation through any situations one can invent for them. If one person is amused by a book it has not been written entirely in vain, even if the author be the only beneficiary.

My other attempt was at serious history, and the Clarendon Press produced a book called *Twenty Years*, being a study of the development of the Party System between 1815 and 1835. It contains some admirable reproductions of some inaccessible cartoons: it interested Mr. Bonar Law: and it convinced me that serious historical work is impossible for a schoolmaster. It takes a week or two to recover from any given term: at least two or three more to soak oneself in the literature of a period, even if one knows it pretty well, and the time available for writing in the holidays is nearly gone, even supposing that no contentious parents are anxious to air their numerous and well-founded grievances, and that no

zealous colleagues insist on discussing the arrangements for the ensuing term.

A schoolmaster's holidays, much envied by outsiders, are not quite as generous as they look on paper: and it is sometimes forgotten that when he is at work he may very likely be at work all the time, especially if he happens to be a parson: there are, or may be, fifty-two week-ends in non-scholastic careers. Anyhow, I decided to write no more history: in days when "documents" are so numerous and study so detailed, it is a whole-time job. The world has borne its loss with equanimity, and I should not dream of blaming it, though I think it is perhaps a pity that amateurs should be warned off the field.

## 13

It was while I was at Eton that I paid my second visit to America, this time under the auspices of the English-speaking union. It, and another visit which I have paid since, have confirmed me in the belief that a good understanding (in the literal sense of the word) between England and the United States is the most important political objective in the world.

It is extremely difficult to achieve: the three thousand miles of sea which separate us provide three thousand very palpable obstacles, and there are many other hindrances to our harmonious co-operation, but mutual ignorance is the chief foe, and ignorance is capable of being mitigated if not dispelled. We

often, and naturally, blame the Americans for their lack of comprehension of us, and forget how extremely ignorant we are of them, and how few steps we take to counteract it. It is irritating to see in an American paper a picture of the crowds cheering King George after the Armistice described as a mob howling against the monarchy during a strike, but the average newspaper reader in England would be equally gullible as to events over there, and our papers, though they would not willingly mislead, do less than they might to keep us well informed.

But it is really the schools which are more to blame: American history is short and comprehensible, and when treated as it is in *The Epic of America* forms a very thrilling story. American historians have been far from blameless in the past, but they are to-day taking a much more objective view of their national record, and the anti-English obsession is no longer obvious; we ought to make more effort than we do to ensure that all boys know its elementary facts.

No doubt what is most needed is some appreciation of scale: it is as hard for the average Englishman to remember that Great Britain would be one of the smaller states in the Union as it is for Americans to realize how close we are to Paris or Berlin, and how inextricably we are involved in Continental affairs. We were disposed to blame President Wilson for his slowness in bringing America into the war: anyone who has been there and realized the diversity of races

and interests which he had to conciliate will be rather disposed to marvel that he ever did it at all. The affairs of Belgium seem somewhat remote in Kentucky: there are still two thousand miles to go west before you reach the Pacific Coast, and during those two thousand miles the interest in Europe is steadily and naturally evaporating.

I own that in the early days of the war I felt inclined to retaliate on America those words in which Lowell taunted us for lack of sympathy with the North in the Civil War:

We know we have a cause, John,  
That's honest, right and true,  
We thought 'twould win applause, John,  
If nowhere else, from you:

but since I have been there I see the situation more truly: everyone cannot visit America, but everyone can be encouraged to understand her position. It is high time that steps should be taken to deal with what is called by a very well qualified observer "that massive, and apparently irreducible, ignorance about the American system of government which afflicts the average non-American." We over here read Mr. Sinclair Lewis, and in view of his popularity in his own country are disposed to credit the almost incredible pictures that he draws: but he is an artist, not a photographer, and draws together from many quarters the material to make his pictures. Babbitt lives, but is not omnipresent; Elmer Gantry has a

still narrower habitation: and Ann Vickers is very clearly a composite portrait. It is to be regretted that Mr. Sinclair Lewis, like many English novelists, has apparently never met, or at least never listened to, a sane Christian.

There is another line of approach which schools might helpfully pursue. I am no great admirer of the American Constitution, but it provides a study of the greatest interest, and I am very glad that I read Bryce's *American Commonwealth* with some care at Oxford. I think that the insane attempt of its authors to keep Executive, Legislative and Judiciary completely separate is responsible for most of the present troubles of Europe, as for those of their own country, for, but for it, America would have been a member of the League of Nations: I hold no brief for its provisions about the office of Vice-President (though they did give us President Theodore Roosevelt): nor am I enamoured of fixed constitutions as a whole. But the subject is one of the greatest interest, and until one has realized what State Rights meant in the past, and mean in the present, one's opinion about the United States and their probable future is entirely negligible.

The American Constitution has that same efficiency and directness of purpose which in a later generation has made American plumbing the admiration of the world: unfortunately politics are more complex than plumbing; and the Englishman, as he gloomily gropes for a recently improvised bathroom

in an old manor house, may console himself with the reflection that the improvisations and makeshifts which have given him what he calls a constitution are preferable to the mechanical perfection which Americans are bidden to revere.

The study of the American Constitution is no mere impersonal thing: no one has appreciated the possible tragedies of political life who has not seen the photograph of President Wilson driving with his successor to the White House, the paralysed prophet of a great ideal side by side with the triumphant advocate of "normalcy." I doubt if the long records of English politics can produce a more pathetic picture.

It is a very great mistake to suppose that the country is one of expatriated Britishers longing for closer union with us, and repenting their division: but it is true to say that the best and prevalent American sentiment is very closely akin to our own on most questions of great importance, and that her best statesmen and her best journalists recognize the fact. Everything possible ought to be done by men of good will on both sides to minimize the many causes of friction and to capitalize the real unity of purpose which exists, and that involves an intelligent appreciation of the difficulties in the way.

I have always thought that if Lady Sarah Lennox's horse had not put its foot in a rabbit hole and she had married George III (as I think she meant to do), she, who was afterwards to become the mother

of the Napiers, would have given him wiser counsel than any he may have received from Queen Charlotte. This would at least have been an "English Speaking Union" in the literal sense of the words. She *might* have induced him to take a conciliatory line with America: the Revolution *might* never have taken place, and though these are idle dreams, it ought not to be beyond the reach of statesmanship to secure that those ideals of justice and freedom and liberty of conscience which are equally dear to both countries are, through their combined agency, commended to a world which needs them.

## 14

I have throughout these chapters been in somewhat of a dilemma—aptly defined by a young Etonian as being "what you get from sitting on the horns of a bull." Educational theory tends to be dull and dogmatic: and autobiography implies a presumption which I am far from feeling. It is all very well for Horace to say that the useful must be mixed with the pleasant, but I mistrust my sugar though I have some confidence in my pill. In any case, to vary the metaphor abruptly, the bowling will now be changed and the autobiographer will only be called upon to deliver a few more overs before the close of play.



## CHAPTER IX

### I

THIS book, contrary to my hopes and expectations, has become distressingly autobiographical: it is high time to leave personalities for principles and to try to justify my existence as an educationalist. It is all very well for Disraeli to say "Read nothing but biography: it is life without theory," but I doubt if he was contemplating the biographies, or autobiographies, of Deans.

The end of my time as a schoolmaster is perhaps the appropriate moment for stating some of the conclusions which I have formed on various subjects connected with that profession which Dr. Stephen Leacock describes from bitter experience as "the most dreary, the most thankless, and the worst paid profession in the world." But if, as we are now told, it is more probable that Shakespeare began life as a schoolmaster than as a butcher, it would seem that the profession need not necessarily warp either the intellect or the character: and was not Dean Inge once a master at Eton?

This will inevitably involve a certain amount of repetition, for my conclusions are necessarily based on the active and passive experiences of half a cen-

ture: the reader has had before him some of the evidence: I do not expect him to accept all the conclusions, but I shall be disappointed if I do not leave on him the impression that for a schoolmaster to believe whole-heartedly in the English public school system does not imply that he regards it as perfect. My point is rather that an institution, like an individual, benefits from the criticisms of those who believe in it (or at least have some working knowledge of it) and not from vague and general abuse.

Like an individual—the words remind me of a frivolous story which I must tell before embarking on my serious educational theme. Great men do not always write well: the Provost of Eton has a bad notoriety: a letter addressed to me by his Vice-Provost was delivered to “Messrs. Spottiswoode & Co.” in error:<sup>1</sup> nor, I hasten to add, do I write very well myself. But it was my predecessor at Durham whose writing led him into one of the worst misprints in history. In an introduction to a book of patriotic song he wrote, “A nation, like an individual, does not live on bread alone”: the printer printed “admiral” for individual, and the sentiment, though at least equally true, became definitely less inspiring.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A local rhymester once described how  
his colleagues, working far into the night,  
With faith and hope and charity decipher the disparity  
“Twixt what he means to say to them and what he seems  
to write.

<sup>2</sup> My own most damaging experience was when the last line of a hymn, “Grant us to sleep and wake at last in Thee,” was printed “in Three”: nor can I refrain from quoting Arthur

Here then begins my *apologia* for the public school system: it will be clear that I am disposed to ask as George III did about the English Church, What has it done to apologize for? but lest the unwary reader should complain that he is trapped into unexpected boredom I will summarize the *theses* which I endeavour to maintain.

1. That Head Masters are not really like deep-sea fish, and that there are some excuses to be made for them if they at times appear to be.
2. That our public schools are a great national asset, not always appreciated as they deserve.
3. That the commoner accusations brought against them have little basis in fact.
4. That boys work harder and more intelligently than they used to work.
5. That sufficient thought has not yet been given to the education of the average boy.
6. That it is a pestilential heresy that everyone ought to know something about everything.
7. That I have some ideas which are worth considering by the teachers of Latin, Greek, modern languages, history and English: if I do not add science and mathematics it is not entirely from modesty, but rather from a well-grounded fear that no one would believe me.

Benson's story of a telegram received by his father when Truro Cathedral was consecrated:

Et populus dicat, Flint Lint Butter.

It came from Cambridge, and with that I will leave the reader to work out his own solution.

## 2

Books written by Head Masters on education labour under manifold disadvantages. Most members of the public have a well-grounded belief that it is hardly playing the game for Head Masters to continue to lecture them when their school days are done. By all the laws of sport it is time for the other side to go in.

And when it comes to ex-Head Masters (or as they are often gloomily called "late Head Masters") the position is still more insecure. It is all very well to lecture when one wields authority over a considerable number of boys, but when there remains no shadow of a right to this glorious distinction, when one's authority is only exercised in restraining the mild eccentricities of canons or chastening the still milder crimes of choristers, when, in short, one is nothing but a Dean, how can one in decency claim a hearing?

I do not claim that all my views are right: nor even that I have always acted on them: but I have formed a few very definite opinions, and am the more ready to utter them that by doing so I can harm no educational institution: there is something to be said for positions of greater freedom and less responsibility.

Finally, I should be more than sorry if I seemed arrogantly to criticize public school masters: no one

has had a better opportunity than I of knowing their virtues, their difficulties and their unselfishness. My wounds, if indeed I give any, are those of a friend.

I write because it seems to me that the English people are not always aware how great an institution they possess in their public schools: I owe too much to them myself not to wish to help, if I can, to show them in their true light as against their more malevolent critics, and to suggest the lines on which, as it seems to me, they can increase their usefulness.

I feel that in twenty years any intelligent person ought to have cast off a great many prejudices, and am, to tell the truth, somewhat alarmed by the persistence of my own: I realize that it will be open to any critic to point to me as an outstanding example of that fossilized mind which is supposed to be the characteristic of a schoolmaster. I can only comfort myself by the reflection that truths do not go bad by mere lapse of time, and that, while prejudices may no doubt persist by sheer inertia, it is at least possible that they owe their vitality to some nobler cause.

I see, for instance, no sort of reason to withdraw or qualify a conviction which I once expressed that "an English public school is the best instrument yet devised for making a decent citizen out of the average English boy," and I should be ready to maintain the more general proposition which I then enunciated that "the English public school system is certainly the most original, and on the whole the most successful, of our national institutions."

Similarly, though I am far from maintaining that the Church of England is faultless, I still feel that "it is, both intellectually and morally, a body which any honest Christian may think it an honour to serve," and that it is only in the central position which it (amid much obloquy) maintains that there is any real hope for the ultimate reunion of Christendom.

## 3

I was reading yesterday a book by a distinguished American in which he describes his countrymen as he saw them at a certain period in the last century: "they had no time for thought; they saw, and could see, nothing beyond their day's work; their attitude to the universe outside them was that of the deep-sea fish. Above all, they naturally and instinctively disliked to be told what to do, and how to do it."

The words seemed strangely familiar, or if not the words themselves, the sentiments which they convey: I found it hard to believe that I was not reading a description of English Head Masters as a class. That is certainly very much the kind of thing which their critics say, and I laid down the book and asked myself how far the criticism was justified.

"They have no time for thought": I remember a time when, in my ignorance, I looked forward to a Head-Mastership as likely to provide time for thought and possibly for writing. Had not the great

Dr. Arnold written his history from Rugby? Had he not kept a table sacred to this pursuit and turned to it in his spare moments? Alas, I had reckoned without considering two or three important points. Even an Arnold would find that a modern school makes more demands upon his time than did Rugby in the happy days when parents, if they wished to see the Head Master, had to make some of their journey by coach, and before the penny post had almost abolished the front door. Again, even supposing that he had successfully kept them at bay, and had shown himself the type of organizer who gets everyone else to do his work, he would have found the Muse of History a far more exacting mistress than she used to be. It may be—I think it is—the fault originally of the Germans, but it is certainly true that, as I have already said, to write anything which can be called “history” demands to-day an amount of research which can only be accomplished by a genius or a free man. We can only rejoice that the loss is never likely to be so great as when Creighton left the vicarage for the episcopal throne.

But surely the poor man has time to think about Education? No doubt he has, and no doubt he does think about a great number of educational problems, but they are so numerous and so diverse that they leave him somewhat unwilling to meditate much on Education. (It should, in fairness, be added that, being English, he is not a man likely to be attracted by the prospect of meditating on abstractions.) He

is in charge of a great machine, and most of his energies are absorbed in seeing that it runs smoothly.

Some allowance should be made for the amazing diversity of his task. He may not, like Zimri, "in the course of one revolving moon" be "chymist, fiddler, statesman and buffoon," but he may in one day be called upon to function as scholar, financier, detective, moralist, judge, executioner and divine. He may have to spend his morning in reconciling two incompatible colleagues, his afternoon in grappling with the school accounts, and his evening in investigating an alleged offence so serious as to involve a boy's whole career. He never knows when his correction of Latin prose or his preparation of a sermon (if he is in Holy Orders) may not be interrupted by a crisis which demands immediate attention. He hurries from a Confirmation class to the meeting of a Curriculum Committee, and is torn away from watching a school match to discuss how best to deal with an epidemic of scarlet fever. No doubt there are a great many people who work quite as hard, but there are very few who have so little idea, when the day begins, what qualities of mind or character will be called upon before it ends.

Head Masters have seldom been immortalized in verse, but Sir George Trevelyan has a striking couplet in his extravaganza, *Horace at Athens*:

I love her, though she's petulant and cruel,  
As Radley boys adore the Reverend Sewell.

I do not think that many Head Masters deserve the



latter epithet, but it will be seen that they have some excuse if they occasionally earn the former. (I hasten to add that I have no reason to believe that Sir George's aspersions are founded on fact.)

It may be granted, then, that Head Masters are immersed in their daily work and that it is perhaps difficult for them to see beyond it; I know too little of deep-sea fish to be sure how far their horizon extends, or should extend: they are presumably interested in that part of the universe which concerns themselves, and if their judgment as to what *does* concern themselves is at fault they share their disability with other more favoured creatures. They would claim, no doubt, that they regard nothing which is "deep-sea fishy" as alien to themselves and until I know more about their character I shall not further challenge the comparison.

As for "disliking being told what to do and how to do it," it can certainly not be from want of experience. Head Masters, and their schools, are a target which it might be supposed that no one could miss, and if the author of the Book of Proverbs was right in saying that "in the multitude of counsellors there is safety" their salvation would appear to be secure.

It is a common belief that Head Masters are a Conservative body: as a matter of fact, in educational matters they are laths painted to look like iron: it may safely be said that, with the possible exception of the Church of England, no English institution has

undergone such radical changes within the last half century as English public school education. It is an ironic fact that the Church is another body which is constantly reproached for its unwillingness to change with the changing years.

But the instructors, or the would-be instructors, of the Head Masters are so numerous and so vocal as to call for separate treatment.

NOTE.—I confess that I am a little startled to find an ex-Head Master proclaiming in the public press that “the essential qualities for such a post are a capacity for business, social ease, even to the point of agility, and a flair for making an impression in public.” This seems to me to be carrying the typical English attitude towards education to the point of cynicism, and as the writer goes on to suggest that “a company promoter might be still more suitable,” I begin in my slow-witted way to believe that he is being sarcastic. He writes from an Oxford College, and we poor schoolmasters must remember that at the universities they cultivate brains “even to the point of agility.”

4

Before I attempt to deal with the criticisms launched against public schools and their conduct, it will be well to try to explain what they are. Their name is, naturally, a stumbling-block to the foreigner: he expects a “public” school to be one to which all citizens have the right of access: he finds instead that they are limited to a certain class—to those, that is, who can afford to pay their fees.

The reason for the name (which, by the way, is colloquial and not legal) is simple, whether it be

sufficient or not: it means schools which are not conducted for private profit. The masters receive salaries which vary in adequacy, but whatever profits may be made are applied by the Governing Body in the interests of the school as a whole, according to the varied measure of wisdom which Providence has allotted to each of these corporations. Comparatively few of them have endowments worthy of the name: they depend for their financial success, and indeed for their existence, on the goodwill of their *clientèle*.

This system may, or may not, be a good one, but it should not be forgotten, as it often is, that it is very economical for the country as a whole. If the public schools did not exist the nation would have to provide for the pupils whom they educate, and the question whether the parent does, or does not, get good value for his money is, very literally, his own business. So long as he is satisfied the state has no sort of reason to complain. Writers who are fond of pointing out that a large proportion of scholarships to the universities are now won by boys from secondary schools have every right, as citizens, to congratulate themselves on the result, but they have no right to denounce the (presumed) failure of boys to whose education they have not been asked to contribute.

I say "presumed" failure because it is notorious that parents who can afford to pay for their preference may, and often do, in fact, prefer to send their sons without a scholarship to the college of their

choice rather than elsewhere as scholars. The school may lose some credit, but the parent is perfectly right to consider his son's interest first.

The question what is, or is not, a "public school" is one which has for years exercised the ingenuity of the Head Masters' Conference. There is the Scylla of snobbery on the one side and on the other Charybdis, embracing schools so unlike one another in aims and constitution as to suggest no intelligible bond of union: a whirlpool is not a place conducive to coherent thought. They have endeavoured to maintain the principles of freedom from outside interference and of some definite connection with the University: as they include some hundred and fifty schools in their body they may hopefully claim that they are out of Scylla's reach.

These schools, whatever their exact number should be, are generally held to be the custodians of something which is known as "the public school spirit." In this country it is a thing which is taken for granted and receives the affectionate tribute of a laugh—the same kind of laugh with which we greet the foreigner's suggestion that a British statesman has displayed a Machiavellian subtlety. We like our statesmen, or some of them, but we find it hard to believe that they are clever: in the same way we regard a decent public schoolboy with content, but refuse to believe that there is anything remarkable about him.

That is not the view taken by the outside world:

otherwise I cannot account for the constant stream of foreigners who come to England in the fervent hope of finding out what the public school spirit is, with the avowed intention of transplanting it to their own soil. The fact is undeniable: the sofa in my study at Eton was worn out by men of every colour and every continent hopefully prepared to take down in notebooks my account of this strange phenomenon. The Japanese were as persistent as any: I confess that I was unable to be sure whether the two who waited on me almost every year were the same pair that I had seen before: they certainly asked the same questions, and I answered them as best I could, in that same broken English into which one inevitably drifts under the beam of two pair of Japanese spectacles.

They always listened with a flattering attention: unlike the Frenchman who, on hearing that the boys on that particular day had no work after luncheon and no one detailed to look after them till it was nearly time to go to bed, resentfully closed his notebook and intimated that he saw that I had no intention of telling him the truth.

It is not therefore from want of practice that I find it difficult to explain the mystery: it is rather that to most of my readers what I have to say will seem lamentably obvious.

Let us begin with what shocked my friend the Frenchman: there is no doubt that the English public school allows an amount of freedom which is

beyond precedent.<sup>1</sup> It goes without saying that the freedom is often abused both by those who want to be idle and by those who want to do wrong, but there are few English schoolmasters who regret the experiment. It seems to them agreeable to the national character, and in their bolder moods they may even hint that it has some justification in the Divine education of the human race.

Closely connected with this is the authority which the boys are allowed to exercise over one another. The "prefect system" is popularly supposed to date from Dr. Arnold: the historical point is both unimportant and (as I have hinted) obscure, but, whatever its origin, and whether the boys in authority are called prefects or monitors or have no special name at all, there is no doubt that the control of boys by boys is a characteristic feature of an English school.

Their authority is usually, though not necessarily, supported by the right to inflict corporal punishment—a thing very horrid to our American cousins and to a certain section of the British public. Personally, I have no qualms about corporal punishment which, if properly administered, has the inestimable advantage of a quick settling of the business and leaves no resentment behind in the mind of a normal boy.

<sup>1</sup> This claim may seem to require some qualification from those who know how little check there is on the way in which foreign boys spend their evenings. The point is that being as a rule day boys they are subject to none but parental control: the English system provides for the largest possible measure of freedom in a disciplined environment.

Whatever other punishment masters may be able to inflict—and I know of no one who does not regard the setting of “ lines ” as a sign of weakness—it seems to most British people that the cane is the best symbol of a boy’s authority. It is sometimes misused, but safeguards are not difficult to invent and the combination of a cruel house captain and an incapable housemaster is fortunately rare.

It is no doubt time that a reformer should arise who will invent a new form of punishment, but it is with the punishments inflicted by masters rather than the summary justice dealt out by boys that he will be mainly called upon to deal.

I believe so firmly in this internal discipline that its absence is probably the reason for my lukewarm faith in girls’ schools. If I am told that it does exist there, I shall answer that while I have no sympathy with the parent who objects to his son’s being ordered about by the sons of other people, I do sympathize with the parent who does not like his daughter’s being ordered about by other people’s daughters.

This is possibly a prejudice dating obscurely from the “ caveman ” age: but I prefer to find its origin in a wise saying uttered to me by Mrs. Cornish, wife of the Vice-Provost of Eton, when my eldest daughter was born. She met me in Weston’s Yard, and on hearing the news exclaimed, “ A daughter! How delightful! Men go in herds, but every woman counts! ”

I have also a feeling that girls’ schools have, on

the whole, been content to take the general lines of their education from the older established institutions for my own, the weaker, sex. My own feeling is that the problem ought to be attacked by some original genius on quite different lines, and, while I am no academic die-hard, I greatly wish that a women's university could have existed in which no man should set foot.

There are more ways than one in which a University town can suffer from "ribbon development."

These are perhaps vain imaginings, and I should like to pay a tribute to some admirable girls' schools that I know: though I deprecate their habit of dressing in white—a very searching colour—on all their great occasions. It is distressing to have to distribute prizes with one's eyes shut.

I acquiesce, it will be seen, in the necessity of punishment of some kind. I admire those who refuse to do so, and can imagine a small and intimate community in which it could safely be dispensed with, but I cannot imagine that this could happen in a large community without an amount of conventional exhortation and insincere acceptance of it which would be nauseating to the average boy. After all, there is such a thing as the right to be punished if you feel that you deserve it, and I know nothing which enables you to start again so easily.<sup>1</sup> Some

<sup>1</sup> Perhaps I may be allowed a footnote of personal experience. On one occasion it fell to my lot to have a boy to breakfast one morning, to beat him (with his entire consent) an hour or



punishments, no doubt, are undeserved, and in some rare boys leave a lasting feeling of resentment: most of them are prepared to agree that a reasonable balance may be struck between their undeserved sufferings and their equally unmerited escapes.

It is time to return from this digression to the other agencies which foster the public school spirit. I should put high among them the friendly relationship already referred to, which can exist, and usually does exist, between masters and boys. This is a thing of comparatively recent growth. In all generations there have been boys who owed an enormous debt to the friendship of a particular master, but fifty years ago it was by no means common. (It was not until I was in the Sixth Form that it occurred to me to regard a master as a possible friend, and I have already remarked that when I first went to Eton at the end of last century the Warden of All Souls, Sir William Anson, was genuinely horrified at what I told him of the intimacy and friendliness of the relations of tutor and pupil.) No change seems to me more striking in the period of nearly fifty years since I first entered a public school.

I have no personal knowledge of the relations of boys and masters in other European countries: in the

two later for an offence undiscovered when the invitation was issued, and to play fives with him before luncheon. This was an engagement made a day or two before, and neither of us saw the least reason for cancelling it. No one who cannot understand that story has any claim to a knowledge of the English public schoolboy—or his master.

great American "private" schools the same friendly intercourse is common, but they would be the first to admit that in this respect they have learnt from us. I do not wish to be thought to exaggerate, or to maintain that all boys like (or indeed ought to like) all masters, but it may be safely said that a boy is very unfortunate, or very ill-conditioned, who passes through a school without making at least one real friend among his masters, and without learning to regard them as a body well-intentioned, though often ill-advised.

This, then, is the atmosphere in which a public schoolboy grows—an atmosphere of freedom, tempered by a discipline largely administered by his companions, which he accepts, if for no other reason, because he hopes one day to exercise it himself: his masters vary in the claim which they make on his intelligence or his affection, but all of them are presumed to have some real interest in his moral or intellectual progress. It is not surprising that in these conditions he develops a loyalty to the institution of which he forms a part.

There is a great deal of nonsense written and spoken about "learning to play the game": I have known distinguished generals maintaining with pride that it was the one thing they learnt at Eton, and I have heard a distinguished statesman suggest that Mr. Balfour learnt it there—a suggestion which would seem to throw an unfavourable light on the duplicity and selfishness normally practised in the

home from which he came: but in spite of the "roaring cataract of nonsense poured forth upon this tremendous subject" (as Macaulay wrote of Mr. Montgomery's description of the Day of Judgment) there is something of a rock over which the cataract descends. It is the fact that the average boy cares a good deal for the honour and the credit of his house or of his school, and that is a very great thing. It is the first unselfish emotion which he feels after he has learnt the love of his family, and it leaves a lasting mark upon him.

I remember a public schoolboy who as a recruit in the war was solicited by a woman of the streets. He rejected her overtures, saying that that sort of thing was not done in the school from which he came. The retort seems priggish, until you learn that he had the best possible reason for knowing it to be untrue, as he had been himself sent away for immorality. You may judge his character as you will, but you can hardly refuse to admire his wish to represent the school he cared for as a better place than he knew it to be.

That, though a true story, is of course an extreme instance: but it remains true that the desire not to "let down" his house, or his school, or people who have trusted him, remains a real element in a boy's make-up, and is of incalculable value.

I am very far from maintaining that all public school boys respond continually to this motive, whether at school or afterwards, though, as far as

their later records are concerned, it should be remembered that England's criminals have a curious and pathetic habit of claiming a connection with its famous schools which is often quite unjustified in fact. It is also true that their idea of what does let a school down is often very inadequate: the point is that the motive exists and operates.

For instance, to appear in the police courts on a charge of fraud would strike all schoolboys as definitely discreditable, and the idea that they would disgrace thereby the school they came from is perfectly real. It may be an accident, but it is at least an interesting coincidence, that the comparative purity of our political life coincides with the growth of the public school: to take public money by fraudulent means is one of the things which a gentleman does not do. It is frequently forgotten how modern this prejudice is: our great-grandfathers would, most of them, have regarded it as ridiculous.

I should like to break the thread of my argument here by remarking that, in my opinion, the attempt to allocate particular vices or virtues to particular "classes" is in this country quite absurd. No one class is by law of nature drunken, dishonest or militarist, nor is any class safe by nature from these failings. A sound education is the only thing which can save any section of society, and no section has the right to cast stones at any other. I gave expression to these rather platitudinous sentiments at a

prize-giving not long ago, and was surprised to read next day in staring headlines,

HEAD MASTER OF ETON WARNS GIRLS

ALL ENGLISHMEN ARE DRUNKEN AND DISHONEST

That was not really my contention: I think that an Englishman is like a slice of those cakes which, being constructed in layers, surprise the eater by constant variety, and that, from whatever section of society he may come, his potentialities, whether for good or for evil, are remarkably alike.

But to return to the public school: I should place very high among the achievements of the public school spirit this feeling of loyalty to the institution, as being of definite value both to the individual and to the community to which he belongs. And now it is high time to say with all imaginable emphasis that no public school man claims any sort of monopoly of this spirit. Anyone who knows anything of the great secondary schools of the country will realize that it is present there. The seed has often been brought by a member of some older foundation, but there is no mistaking the fact that it has fallen on congenial soil and has achieved a prodigious growth. So far from resenting this, or seeking to belittle it, every decent public schoolboy will welcome it with open arms. It may well be that the greatest of all the services which the older schools have rendered to the country will one day prove to have been the

transmission of all that is good in the spirit which in the last century they have developed for themselves.<sup>1</sup>

## 5

The critics of public schools fall into two main classes—those who have been to some such institution and those who, if the question were put to them, would reply in the words of Mr. William Dent Pitman, who when he was asked if he came from Australia, answered, “No. No, I do not, and I don’t want to,” he added irritably. The former class must be sub-divided into those who assume that no changes have in fact taken place since they were at school and those who are under no such delusion.

It will be most convenient to deal first with those critics whose opinions are untrammelled by any knowledge of the facts.

The first charge commonly made is that the public schools are strongholds of snobbery. If by that it were merely meant that it is a pity that some schools are only available for the (comparatively)

<sup>1</sup> It is worth remarking that when the question of the Eton War Memorial was being considered there was a strong movement in favour of founding a “public school” on Eton lines for the sons of the rank and file. The project had to be abandoned in view of the imperative need of providing for the education of the sons of fallen Etonians, who were felt to have the first claim: but it is significant that it obtained much support from very representative Etonians.

well-to-do it would be a legitimate suggestion: but it is usually made in a form which suggests that boys learn at school to worship a title or to admire wealth. No charge could be more fantastic. I know of one boy who had to be taken away from a public school because he was unmercifully laughed at for being called Lord Thomas—with that exception I know of no boy whose possession of a title has been either a social advantage or a social handicap. The idea that schoolboys admire the rich is still more ridiculous. Money, at school or elsewhere, can always attract some hangers-on, for it implies

Not only the pleasure oneself of good eating,  
But also the pleasure of now and then treating;

but I know of no school where the possession of money brings consideration, and several cases where it has proved a drawback. If there is (as there conceivably may be) some peculiar pleasure in kicking an incipient duke, there is certainly fun to be had by humiliating a budding millionaire. The last form in which I saw the charge made was that a rich boy was “toadied” by his housemaster!

It should not be forgotten that inverted snobbishness is as real a vice as snobbishness proper: if, while I was at Eton, the Press happened to publish the photograph of some boy with a handle to his name who had won a race, I frequently received anonymous postcards congratulating me on my successful powers of advertisement. “With all their faults,”

it has been truly said, "we love the House of Lords," and it may be "blighted affection" which provokes these outbursts, as it caused Gilbert's tomtit to utter his less acid exclamation.

NOTE.—It is often forgotten that the original Toc H with its motto, "All rank abandon, ye who enter here," was the creation of officers of the Old Army, and in particular of the Brigade of Guards, which is sometimes thought to be tenacious of class distinctions.

Another charge not seldom brought is that the public schools are "hotbeds of militarism." Poor O.T.C.! When I think of the curses which I have heard uttered, and, I confess, have uttered myself, against its parade, its discipline, its route marches, and its camps, it is a little hard to be told that it was all the time instilling into us a passionate love of war. Personally, and speaking as one of the most un-military of people, I am amazed at the readiness with which boys endure the hardships imposed on them, hardships which limit their time for sport and often encroach upon their holidays. I can conceive no reason for their supporting them except that they believe, as indeed they are frequently told on the best authority, that they are preparing themselves, if necessary, to be of use to their country.

When I think of the boys whom I saw marching off to Camp in August 1914 and remember how few of them are alive to-day: when I remember how passionately the majority disliked anything military, I find this particular accusation rather hard to bear. A schoolmaster whose service began in the last



century lost probably more friends than anyone else in the war, and he knows better than anyone else how atrocious is the falsehood that most of them wished for war, or that their successors wish for it to-day.

While I am speaking of the war, I should like to make a suggestion in the event (which God forbid!) of the country having to fight again. It is that the War Office should summon all the Head Masters to London and insist on their remaining there long enough to give an opinion as to the type of service for which their pupils are fit. In 1914 we found ourselves, in default of any instruction from Headquarters, signing forms for commissions for boys with no special capacity for leadership, while boys of exceptional brilliance, who might have done invaluable work as interpreters, scientists, inventors or in any intelligent capacity, were drafted off to be killed as subalterns in a line regiment. That they should be killed was bad enough, but that they should be killed doing work for which they had no capacity, while the work they could have done admirably was being neglected, was a scandal as well as a tragedy. A fortnight's incarceration of a hundred Head Masters would have averted it at small expense.

These are perhaps the only accusations which would not be made against the system by anyone who knew it from the inside: the other stock charges, that they are nurseries of vice, that they are a paradise for

bullies, that they are idle, inefficient and extravagant, are brought at times against public schools by ex-pupils of their own.

The public school novel is the chief authority for the earlier type of complaint. Those who take these works too seriously should be reminded of two facts: first that the boy who writes a novel soon after leaving school is usually somewhat abnormal, though that, of course, does not deprive him of a right to his opinion, and secondly that for the purposes of novel writing it is necessary to dwell on, or to invent, episodes which can be called dramatic. Head Masters, or even assistant masters, are not murdered with the frequency which novel writers (and some others) might wish, and the daily life of a school, if accurately depicted, would, as I have already suggested, be of a dullness such as to daunt the most hardened reader.

Most boys' school lives, like their conversations, present little material for the novelist: comparatively few face dramatic temptations or win dramatic triumphs, on the playing field or off it.

Of course vice exists in public schools, but it is furtive and sporadic, and almost without exception discountenanced by all boys who have any authority: their efforts to repress it vary in success with their wisdom and energy, and are handicapped by their curious ignorance of one another. That sort of thing runs in *strata*, so that while its existence may be well known to boys of a certain type throughout

the school, others, closer to it in geography, are completely unaware of it.

There is no doubt that the language used in schools has deteriorated since the war: the expletive which once satisfied has given place to something stronger, and this inevitably creates a bad impression when faithfully recorded in print. I have an almost morbid dislike of bad language, so that I hope that I shall not be suspected of undue optimism if I say that I think its use (much as I deprecate it) means very little. The whole trouble in the matter lies in the fact of its conventionality: some words are clearly better suited to express irritation than others: it is impossible to show passion by saying "pop": and it is a thousand pities that no original genius has arisen to induce boys to conventionalize the matter still further. If it could once be agreed that "blow" or "dash" were words of the foulest significance, it might be hoped that those who wished to swear would be content to use them, and thereby spare the ears of the sensitive. The words they use now have quite as little meaning for them, and derive all their sinister attraction from associations which the ordinary boy would repudiate with horror.

So long as the public wish for lurid school stories they will get them, but as a rule they give as false an impression of public school life as detective stories would give to a foreigner of the life of the ordinary British citizen.

The genesis of such books is easily explained.

Almost every cleverish boy goes through a period when it seems to him that merit, and in particular his own merit, is insufficiently appreciated, and that (as indeed is true) boys are disposed to exaggerate the importance of athletic distinction. I have already confessed to passing through this stage myself: if you fail to grow out of it, which may well happen if you leave school young, you are a public school novelist *in posse*.

The formula for their production is given with admirable conciseness by one of Miss Dorothy Sayers' heroines: "You don't want experience for writing novels. People write them at Oxford, and they sell like billy-ho. All about how awful everything was at school."

I confess to an old-fashioned prejudice against those who make profit by exploiting the defects of institutions to which they owe a good deal, but it is hard to resist the chance of easy money. One such performance by a nice boy who certainly had received much kindness from his school provoked me to a criticism, possibly unfair, which I reproduce in the hope that it may deter other nice boys from the pursuit:

There was a grubby boy and he had a grubby mind,  
He hunted any grubbiness that ever he could find,  
He wrote a grubby book and it wasn't very funny,  
Though possibly he may have made a little grubby money.

Bullying is no longer a fertile theme: the robust methods of Flashman have no modern imitators, and

the cruelty sometimes shown to an unpopular boy does not lend itself to vivid description. Nor is it as common as it was, for I think there can be no doubt that boys are far more tolerant of eccentricity than they used to be. This is probably most true of bigger schools, for there it is unlikely that any one type will dominate, as may happen in smaller communities, particularly, as I have said, where the school specializes in one particular game.

If I were asked to illustrate what I mean by tolerance, I would beg leave to describe an evening of my life at Eton. I was invited to attend a meeting of the Plain Song Society where some dozen enthusiasts were studying the art. This I was compelled to decline, for I was engaged to attend a sitting of the Fine Art Society. There two boys, in the capacity of champions of two rival artists of whom I had never heard, denounced one another with enormous zest: I had to hurry away because I was due for a meeting of the French Debating Society which met in my study, and there for an hour the future of the automobile was discussed with intimate knowledge and a lamentable accent. None of the boys concerned had any knowledge of the existence of either of the other two societies, but it would have occurred to none of them to doubt their right to exist.

Another charge which is frequently brought is that of undue devotion to athletics: it is assumed that the schoolmaster is responsible for the fact that

his young charges attach undue importance to athletic success. As the Lord Chancellor said in *Iolanthe*,

The compliment implied  
Inflates us with legitimate pride,

but in this, as in other respects, the influence of the schoolmaster is exaggerated. So long as the normal British parent turns to the sporting columns of his daily paper very soon after its arrival it is not to be wondered at that his sons are unduly interested in athletics—and there is at least this to be said on their behalf that their interest centres round the games which they themselves play.

There may be, and no doubt there are, some schoolmasters whose interest in the playing fields is much greater than their care for the classroom: “the games master” in some schools rears his horrid head: and there are others who deserve the satiric comment uttered by Mr. Godley on the sporting don:

the books upon their shelves  
Are the latest works on cricket—which they  
do not play themselves.

But every sensible schoolmaster—and, whatever may be thought, they form the very large majority—is keenly alive to the danger: his chief enemies are the parent, the public and the press.

The press is the least to blame: it naturally supplies its readers with what they want to read, and

can hardly be blamed for its exploitation of public school athletics. The passion for "records" and "tests" is a modern thing, and might easily destroy the whole value of sport were it not for that saving sense of humour which distinguishes the British nation.

The American, with faultless logic, decides that if a game is worth playing at all it is worth playing as well as possible: this leads to a concentration which soon deprives it of all claim to the name of a recreation. The British nation (thank Heaven!) is not logical, and can see something funny in its own enthusiasm. It is from England, not from America, that there comes the limerick which sets records once for all in their proper place:

There was a young fellow called Hover,  
Who bowled twenty-three wides in one over,  
Which had never been done,  
By a clergyman's son,  
On a Thursday—in August—at Dover.

The lengths to which the press is prepared to go are illustrated by their treatment of the eminently healthy, but quite undistinguished, game of squash rackets. It is an admirable sport for those who need rapid exercise and are threatened with obesity, but its championships are far from deserving attention: and there is a real danger that the public may be deluded into thinking that it ought to be called Rackets.

It is not only the games which boys play which suffer from this trans-Atlantic attitude: lawn tennis

and bridge are rapidly becoming impossible for those who seek nothing but a little mild amusement: and did not Lord Dunraven once put on record that American yacht-racing demanded too close an attention to business to be consistent with an Englishman's idea of sport?

A somewhat opposite accusation is brought by those who complain that public schools pay insufficient attention to physical development. It is possible that games do not always develop the body rightly: Dr. Lyttelton, I seem to remember, had a lurid story of a racket champion whose right side was grossly disproportioned, but as I think he lived to be seventy, I have never felt the full pathos of the tale. If public school boys, with all their opportunities for exercise, at school and in the holidays, do not grow up strong they have, I think, themselves to blame. This is not to deny the value of the attempts now generally made to eradicate the particular weaknesses of individual boys, nor to deny the value, moral and physical, of organized and scientific drill. But the time for it should clearly come out of that which is devoted to games.<sup>1</sup>

I confess that my prejudice against "athletic

<sup>1</sup> As will, I fear, be manifest, I am too old-fashioned to be much interested in the modern search for health. I cherish the memory of an evening when I was called up by a very weary reporter and asked for my views on the New Health. As I had been torn away from my unhygienic dinner-table to answer the call, I was in rather a bad temper, and said, somewhat impatiently, "What's the matter with the Old Health?" To my relief the weary voice answered, "God only knows!"



sports" remains unchanged, and I resent the suggestion that it is a duty of the public schools to train Olympic winners. I should be prepared slightly to qualify, but by no means to retract, the opinion that "athletic sports are open to all the objections which lie against games in general with none of their compensating advantages. They are blatantly self-seeking: they admit of no leadership and organization; and whether Waterloo was or was not won on the playing fields of Eton, Armageddon will certainly not be decided on the cinder track."

The only way of moralizing athletic sports would be to insist that individual rewards should be abolished: the only way of making them practically useful would be to assimilate the conditions to those which will be encountered in later life. To catch a train while carrying a small bag without being unduly heated is then the ambition of an average citizen: he learns little by running on specially prepared tracks in the lightest of attire, or by jumping over bars which conveniently give way if he does not jump high enough. That is a thing which will never happen to him again, and such information as his achievement gives him may well be both delusive and dangerous.

## 6

I have reserved to the last the complaints made as to the quantity and quality of the work done in public schools. This is not, as the cynic might

suggest, because Head Masters regard it as the least of their concerns, but rather because it naturally prepares the way for a discussion of the various subjects of study.

It is very easy, and very untrue, to say that public schools encourage idleness. For the reasons which have already been given their efforts to discourage it are less drastic than those made elsewhere, and every public school contains a considerable number of idle boys: it is no sufficient excuse to urge that a large proportion of them are the children of idle parents. I should be prepared to admit that most schools ought to be more ready than they are to part with pupils who are known to be doing as little work as possible. But idleness is a difficult thing to prove—at least to a parent who sees himself likely to be left with a boy on his hands at a very awkward age—and it is not as a rule the idlest boys who are in any real danger of superannuation.

The housemaster usually consoles himself by thinking, sometimes with good reason, that the boy is gaining a good deal from his school life, and that he will in most cases be forced to learn how to work by the necessities of life. Nor will he relax his optimistic efforts to bring about a change of heart.

But it would be extremely wrong to regard such a boy as normal: the great majority of boys do a great deal of work, whether intelligently or not, and a considerable number work both very hard and very well. If some of their efforts are misdirected, it is no

lack of zeal which is responsible for the result. I have already quoted Bishop Creighton's gloomy view of the English boy's attitude to learning. I remember being told by him that a teacher's best weapons to counter this attitude were exaggeration and paradox, and they were weapons which he himself employed with admirable effect.

Boys, I should say, work harder now, and at a far greater variety of subjects, than at any previous time in the history of the public school.

It is often mockingly asserted that these schools regard themselves as places for "the training of character," and think of character as excluding the things of the mind. It is right to examine this accusation a little more closely. What do we wish a boy to learn at school? I imagine that we wish him to be trained, if possible, to be a good man and a good citizen: to be able, if necessary, to earn his living: and to be able to employ in a reasonable and profitable way such leisure as he may have.

Clough's definition, or rather that given by his uncle in the Epilogue to *Dipsychus*, is not entirely out of date. "What is the true purpose of education? Simply to make plain to the young understanding the laws of the life they will have to enter. For example—that lying won't do, thieving still less; that idleness will get punished, that, if they are cowards, the whole world will be against them; that if they will have their own way they must fight for it."

It is plain that two at least of these requirements depend fundamentally on character: you may no doubt earn a good living without it, but your hold will be precarious. It is equally clear that the world is full of good men and good citizens whose minds have been very imperfectly trained,<sup>1</sup> and of others whose conception of the right use of leisure is narrow in the extreme. I do not think that it is possible to exaggerate the importance of character training, and while I should utterly deny that public schools neglect the training of the mind, I should admit that the characters which they normally produce, good and attractive as they are, tend to be of a somewhat narrow kind. Schoolmasters naturally specialize on the qualities which make a boy a useful member of the society in which both of them live, and tend to forget the wider interests which alone can prevent an attractive kitten from growing into a harmless but unnecessary cat.

Even this criticism I should qualify in two directions. In the first place the qualities which make a boy useful in the life of a school are in themselves invaluable in after life: and secondly far more attempts are made to-day than ever before to encourage boys to develop such tastes as they have, and to take an intelligent interest in the lives of other people.

<sup>1</sup> I once at a school prizegiving ventured to say that there were too many stupid people about: I received a post card next day quoting this mild platitude and adding, "Yes, and you are undoubtedly one of them yourself."

To take the latter point first—it is astonishing to see the change which has come over the attitude of boys towards social questions since the war. Thirty years ago a boy's interest in such matters tended to satisfy itself by a mild concern about the School Mission: an interest in politics was the sure sign of a crank. To-day social problems are continually discussed: lecturers, of very varied degrees of efficiency, are invited to propound their remedies, and school societies discuss political questions with an ardour very unlike that which was felt in the debating societies of last century. Toc H may not be a movement suited to schools: probably it is not, for to the boy of to-day the war is a matter of history, but its activities and those of kindred associations make a very definite appeal. I should never, in my school days, have dreamt of parties of boys walking to a hospital, some little distance off, on a Sunday afternoon to talk to disabled ex-service men. School missions inevitably vary in their efficiency, but the social barrier which used to keep public school boys apart from their poorer brethren is far lower than it used to be, and games are played with much mutual content. It is on record that a Borstal boy, playing cricket against an Eton eleven, exclaimed on finding that his opponents were not allowed to smoke a cigarette after luncheon, "Well, thank Gawd I'm not at Eton!"

I am not greatly enamoured of "Civics" as a school subject, and should not be even if it were

called by a less repulsive name, but there is no sort of doubt that the present generation of boys have interests of a social, and a political, nature which were practically unknown to their predecessors.

Similarly, a far greater effort is made nowadays to encourage boys to cultivate intellectual interests outside their ordinary school work. Most schools now give adequate facilities for musical training, and though most music masters would deny the statement, I should be prepared to argue it with them. After all, we all attend those concerts at which their pupils endeavour with varying success to reproduce the great masters: we sit on hard chairs for hours and applaud with invariable politeness. What would they think if I had invited them to listen in similar conditions for hours while my pupils imitated Cicero? And yet it is at least possible that their efforts resemble that great writer as closely as the music I listen to resembles the compositions of Bach or Mozart.

But, having had my small dialectical triumph, I should like to reaffirm that all boys have a right to be taught to play and sing if they have any aptitude for it, and I should add that they have a right to be taught how to appreciate good music, if, as may well be the case, they are almost all capable of learning.

The case for drawing is stronger still, for while we have all had occasion to welcome with the poet "the last notes of the seemingly inexhaustible piano player," the sister art can be studied with no offence

to one's neighbours. Here again, the same principles apply: every boy has a right to be taught to draw as well as he can, and to know some of the principles which underlie intelligent art criticism.

These demands are generally recognized, and in a mechanical age it is far easier than it was, by the aid of gramophone or epidiascope, to teach any who want to learn and, indeed, to arouse an interest in those who are conscious of no such aspiration.

The carpenter's shop appeals to a different type of mind, but it deserves more encouragement than it usually gets, and speaking as one of the clumsiest of mortals, I envy those who have learnt when young the pleasures of construction. I hasten to add that they are not for all: my incapacity was amply and expensively proved before it became an accepted fact: and I have told elsewhere the story of the poor scholar who was allowed to substitute carpentry for Greek, and returned to the classics with a bandaged hand after a week's experience of the more exacting subject.

It may possibly interest those critics who believe that no changes take place in public school education if I recall as faithfully as I can the experiences of my own school days. I do so with no desire to complain, for I owe far too much to Marlborough to say a word against that most delightful place: nor do I, or, so far as I know, my contemporaries, feel that we were badly educated: my point is only that things were different then.

We were taught the classics with considerable success: there was a modern side in which to the best of my belief French and German took the place of Latin and Greek and were taught on much the same principles: but I do not think that you considered going on the modern side unless you were of proved imbecility or were destined for the Army.

No suggestion was ever made that we should study German, though I remember that in my last term I was allowed, as a special concession, to begin it for a few hours a week. I never heard of anyone who learnt or attempted to learn either Spanish or Italian. We learnt enough mathematics to get through the School Certificate: of science no word was spoken: I knew that there were laboratories in which "stinks" were generated, but no one ever suggested that I should visit them, and, what is much more important, no word on any kind of scientific subject was ever uttered, by way of instruction, in my hearing.

No one was ever optimist enough to believe that I could either sing or play: cherishing the latter ambition I joined the brass band, and was assigned an instrument called, to the best of my belief, a flügel-horn. I played it for two hours without eliciting a note: and left the band, no one regretting my departure: I have often wondered since whether I am qualified to join the Old Flügel Horn Players' Association, should such a body exist.



No one ever tried to teach me to draw, and that I do regret, but in those days, having had some experience of the art in its dreariest form, I was relieved: but I think that even then I was dimly sorry that no one ever tried to tell me why some pictures were considered better than others, any more than they explained to me why some kinds of music were thought good and others bad.

By way of contrast to this picture I append a list of the comparative numbers of boys specializing in different subjects (after passing the School Certificate) at the school with which I have more recently been associated. Out of two hundred and twenty-two boys, fifty-one, or a good deal less than a quarter, are continuing the study of Latin and Greek: thirty-six are specializing in modern languages: ninety-two in history, and forty-three in mathematics and science.

I add also the list of subjects from which they have to choose for four hours' work a week—it being the rule that a boy must not in those hours pursue the subject in which he is specializing: English, French, German, Spanish, Italian, Latin, Archæology, Mathematics, Biology, Music and Drawing.

I should like to make it clear that I merely give those figures because they are easily accessible to me: so far from suggesting that they are exceptional I believe them to represent the general position in most of the larger public schools.

Again, I must not be understood to suggest that

the modern type of education is necessarily, or in all respects, superior: my present point is only that it is extremely *different* from that which a boy received a half century ago. The critics who maintain that there has been no change might as well complain of the unbending rigidity of the British Constitution or the indecent stability of the pound.

The real trouble is that the changes which have been made, beneficial as many of them no doubt are, have not been made in accordance with any considered theory, or with any general scheme of education. The teachers of the classics did not, to use the famous phrase, retire from their strongly entrenched positions "according to plan": their retreat became a rout, and, as usually happens in such circumstances, much that was of real value was needlessly thrown away.

Again, to continue the military metaphor, they did not retire to carefully chosen positions in the rear: on the contrary they retired inch by inch, defending the indefensible, and finally settled down in a position which was not of their choosing: something has been done since to consolidate it, but it attempts to cover too wide an area and is still very open to attack.

To put the matter more simply, Head Masters and their governing bodies have yielded to all the demands made on them, with the result that the curriculum tends to be overloaded, so that no subject gets sufficient attention, and no real attempt has been

made to decide what the average boy (if he exists) should be expected to learn.

It should be added that Head Masters are by no means entirely free agents: they may be able to dictate to the preparatory schools, if they are courageous enough, and sure enough of their principles, to do so, but they have to conform to the demands of the universities. It is true that a committee exists to maintain touch between the universities and the public schools, but (like the Committee on Noxious Literature) it is one of those to which all sensible Head Masters wish to be appointed, because it so rarely meets. That simple fact (and the temper which it implies) does much to explain the chaos in this particular field of education.

The schoolmasters of some eighty years ago had a consistent theory of education. They believed that the classics were for all boys the best if not the only road to learning, and they acted on their belief. So persistent was their theory that when I first went to Eton in the last year of the last century every boy was still learning Latin and Greek, and every boy, throughout his career, was still doing Latin verses. Two small illustrations will show the lengths to which the theory was carried: there was a week in which, according to the printed schedule, both the Sixth Form and the Third Form studied the same passage of Theocritus: a scientific pupil of mine (who had already made a great name for himself in science before he was killed in a line battalion) continued to

the end of his Eton days to produce Latin verses every week. I don't think he minded it, but it was difficult to believe that he gained much from the exercise.

This monopoly was rightly and naturally challenged from various quarters. Mathematics and French forced their way in. They were not welcomed, and in the apostolic phrase "men were set to teach who were of no account" in the school. The passing tribute of a sigh may be paid to those gallant sons of Gaul who refused to believe that all was lost, even when their ministrations, and indeed their persons, were regarded with ridicule both by their pupils and by the more conservative of their colleagues. Too often must they have had occasion to repeat, when considering their pupils' prospects in an examination, the words later to be charged with a nobler meaning, *Ils ne passeront pas*.

But their lives were not given in vain: they had effected a breach. Through the breach thus made Science was not slow to enter. For many years it had marched round the walls, blowing its own trumpet with considerable efficiency, and though the fortifications did not even in the end fall entirely flat they were able to come in "like a conqueror into a surprised city and having got such possession, governed and made there such laws and resolutions as" the luckless defenders of the classics "were unable to resist."

Their victory had been long delayed, and it is

impossible to grudge it them: but, as we look back, now that time has allayed the bitterness of conflict, it is legitimate to regret not only the passions that were aroused, but the many false assumptions which were made by both parties in the controversy.

## 7

The mistakes of the classical party are obvious: they were prepared for no concessions, resembling rather those ultimate defenders of Constantinople who preferred to see "the Turkish turban rather than the cardinal's hat" in Santa Sophia or, if a more vulgar simile be preferred, were ready to empty out the baby with the bath. If they might not teach composition both in Latin and Greek, both in verse and prose, to all boys, they maintained that their favourite subjects would perish of inanition.

One solitary voice, so far as I remember, was raised to urge moderation: that of the author of a pamphlet entitled *To Save Greek, Abolish Latin Prose*: but he had laid profane hands on the ark of the covenant, and we all remember what happened to the well-intentioned Uzzah.

But if the attitude of most of the champions of the classics was indefensible what shall be said of their opponents? Was there any voice raised in their camp to remind them that Greece was the first European home of science, or even that their vocabulary depended for its intelligent use on some

knowledge of the Greek language? I can remember none: on the contrary, a passionate stream of attack was launched on everything Greek, and its abolition for the scientific student became a battle-cry. One can make every allowance for very great provocation and yet deplore so curiously unscientific an attitude.

In the course of the argument a great deal of lip-service was paid to Latin: I even remember a speaker declaring that the high-minded precepts of Horace had often been his standby in times of moral stress: but the praise was as dishonest as the depreciation of Greek: the scientist of that day had no real use for either.

That is the first of the melancholy reflections which occur to me: the second is that, like the Romans of old who were led captive by captured Greece, the victorious scientists were corrupted by their defeated foes, and proceeded to repeat the very faults against which they had so justly protested.

The root fallacy of the old classical teaching was that it treated every boy alike, and so teaching which was admirable for the scholar was expended on boys who were quite unfit to say "Bo!" to the classical goose.

But (as I have mentioned geese) there is an old saying that what is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander, and it is every bit as ridiculous to treat every boy as a potential science scholar as it was to assume that he was capable of classical distinction.

But that is what the scientists have done, and are

still to a large extent doing: their natural and creditable belief in the value of their own subject has led them, as it led the classical scholars, to believe that it is capable of being imparted to all—an assumption which is demonstrably untrue. There are some boys, of whom I am, or rather was, one, who are constitutionally incapable of performing a scientific experiment with accuracy: we are far from wishing to challenge the nature or the value of the result obtained, but our faith in it is weakened rather than strengthened by our repeated failure to obtain it for ourselves.

And why in the world should we be compelled to try? No one in his senses can suppose that we shall become science scholars: why in the world should we be compelled to waste our time in going through a course of training which can have no other purpose? To take us to the laboratories is as absurd as to ask the scientific boy to construct Greek iambics. It is also, as all Head Masters know to their cost, a great deal more expensive.

The point which I am trying to make is so important that I must elaborate it in greater detail, for I verily believe that it is only by bearing it in mind that we can hope to achieve any real reform in English public school education.

We ought frankly to realize the fact that there are two main types of boy, if we regard him for the moment as an animal capable of education—the literary and the scientific. The classification is

obviously a rough one, but it is perfectly real: I do not believe that any of my readers would find it difficult to say to which class they belong. It is surely clear that our education should take account of this broad difference and shape its methods accordingly. That there are practical difficulties in so doing are undeniable, but if we attempt to recognize this fundamental division we shall at least be sure that we are proceeding on sound lines.

I will take first the case of the boy whose interest lies primarily in literature, and whose training should be predominantly of that kind. The methods are fairly well established, though I shall have more to say of them when we come to speak of particular subjects: the interesting question is to consider how much that is non-literary he ought to learn, and of what type that learning should be.

Let us begin with mathematics. I know very well that for a non-mathematical person to speak of that subject is to expose his ignorance, and I have no sort of doubt that for those who really pursue it it opens fields of thought as wide as those to which any other subject gives entrance.

But does any teacher of mathematics suppose that for the vast majority of boys whom he instructs any such prospect is conceivably open? Let us clear our minds of cant, and admit that the mathematics which the unmathematical are likely to acquire bears much the same relation to mathematics proper as a child's clay figure bears to the Venus of Milo. If we are to



be taught mathematics at all, it must be for some humbler and more practical reason.

The practical value of arithmetic is indisputable, and it is no doubt for that reason that it is regarded as the lowest branch of the subject: poor Martha has her uses, for serving tables, but her tables, like those of multiplication, are only a sign of her lowly calling. To be "good at arithmetic" is not only no guarantee of mathematical proficiency, but may even show that you have no aptitude for higher things: and certainly I have known some excellent mathematicians who seemed to me to add extremely ill.

The Euclid of my school days has gone, mildly regretted by all who mastered his first book and a very little of the second: of his successor Geometry I cannot speak from practical experience. I imagine that it teaches you to reason sensibly, as Euclid did, and I can dimly see that it has more practical value. Every training in accurate thinking is valuable, but it must not be forgotten that if a literary education does not give training in accuracy it must be wholly unworthy of the name. I frankly do not know whether the accurate use of words employs and trains the same faculty as the accurate use of geometrical figures, but I think it very possibly does, and though I do not (as at present advised) grudge the time spent on geometry I am not entirely convinced.

When we pass to the subject of Algebra, my conviction is definite and my grudge profound. I was taught the subject for several years and, as I have

already boasted, passed in it in the Higher Certificate examination: but why I learnt it, or what conceivable benefit I could ever have hoped to derive from it was as obscure to me as I believe it to have been to the patient men who taught me. That it has value I should be the last to deny: that it has or ever could have had any value for me I challenge anyone to affirm. I am fortified in my arrogance by the words of Dr. Whitehead, who cannot be suspected of any prejudice against the subject as a whole: he speaks of the "scraps of gibberish taught to boys in their schooldays in the name of Algebra" as "deserving of some contempt." I humbly and heartily agree.

But why was this preposterous experiment ever made? And why is it still being made on hundreds of innocent victims to-day? Simply because no one has ever asked himself why algebra should be taught to the unmathematical: the teachers have gone on the simple principle that mathematics is a good thing, and of a good thing no one can have too much: the taught are too conscious of their own ignorance to venture a complaint, and the factors of  $a^3 - b^3$  are indelibly stamped on memories which have in vain endeavoured to repel them. The word, I am informed by the dictionary, means "the redintegration of broken parts": that is very much the sort of thing I expected it to mean, but who shall "redintegrate" the hours, or parts of hours, fantastically broken in this preposterous pursuit?

But the universities love to have it so, and in one

of their more humorous moods have ordained that a boy who cannot pass in the subject is unfit to study classics, or history or modern languages, under their auspices. They may have relaxed their requirements of late, but I have seen no suggestion that their Vice-chancellors should wear white sheets in token of penitence.

The literary boy should be required to know some arithmetic, and possibly some geometry: to demand algebra from him is to provoke dangerous reprisals.

When we come to Science I am very anxious that he should be given some knowledge, but very certain that he should be given it in a different way from that which is rightly ordained for his scientific brother. "Thousands of boys are at present doing experiments in expensive laboratories who knew beforehand what to expect in view both of the known nature of the materials they are handling and the known quantity of their own incompetence. I doubt whether this is education." I put these sentences in inverted commas because I ventured, greatly daring, to utter them before a gathering of the Royal Institution, and was cheered to find that they met with general agreement.

That Institution has for years been organizing popular science lectures in the best sense of the term, and has risen superior to the prejudice which holds that "popular" science must be synonymous with what is inaccurate or sloppy. The great Faraday, in his evidence before the Public School Commissioners

many years ago, urged that it was difficult to understand why "no sufficient attempt should be made to convey to the young mind the natural knowledge which has been given to the world in such abundance" in recent years. No sufficient attempt has yet been made, and science teachers generally have preferred to try to turn all their pupils into science scholars, with results with which they are very far from satisfied.

The ears of many of us are, for this purpose, sows' ears, and the attempt to make silk purses of them is doomed to failure; on the other hand, they are quite good ears for ordinary purposes, and listen with avidity to a teacher who will try to convey to us in simple language some of the great results of scientific discovery. It is ridiculous to maintain that I have no right to be interested in Pasteur because I could not successfully perform the simplest of the experiments which led to his discoveries: you might as well maintain that no one can appreciate music without learning to perform, or like poetry without endeavouring to write it.

It must be repeated that the scientists fell into the very same error as that which had betrayed their classical antagonists: if the classical Solomon chastised with whips we have learnt to dread the scorpions of the scientific Rehoboam.

I cannot believe that it would be difficult to devise a test which would show that the literary boy had some knowledge of scientific results, and an inkling

at least of the method by which they were obtained: naturally he could not be expected to cover the whole field, but if, as could hardly fail to happen, his interest was definitely roused in some one or two of the great scientific discoverers and discoveries, he would be a wiser and a happier boy than he is now, with his compulsory smattering of physics and chemistry. The glass trade would be the poorer, but though omelettes cannot be made without breaking eggs it is quite unnecessary to break test tubes in order to acquire a real interest in science.

I foresee that I shall have roused the indignation of all my scientific and mathematical colleagues, but I beg them not to throw this book aside until they have learnt what concessions I am prepared to make on my side. Let me conciliate them, if I can, at once by saying that if they will let me off algebra I am prepared to let them off Latin prose. And I am anxious that the greatness of my concession should be appreciated. I believe Latin prose to be on the whole the best single subject which I have ever tried to teach: it is one of the two subjects on which I should be ready, if necessary, to elect a classical scholar. But the Latin prose of which I am thinking bears much the same relation to that exacted of boys in the School Certificate examination as the higher mathematics bears to my algebra. No noble subject was ever more basely prostituted to examination purposes: no distinguished name was ever more shamelessly misapplied.

I want to see the scientific boys obtain some literary culture, and also some knowledge of the correct use of words, and I believe that, as things are, this latter purpose can best be served by their learning Latin. "There's a great deal," as Mr. Bentley has truly observed, "to be said for being dead," and a dead language—especially one over which schoolmasters have for years taken so much trouble—has very definite advantages over a living one.

I should wish them to learn Latin grammar, for it is silly to suppose that a language can be profitably learnt without its grammar, but I see no point in forcing them to learn its composition. For some obscure reason the writing of simple Latin prose is to the non-literary boy one of the hardest of exercises, and I cannot excuse the waste of time spent in bringing such a pupil up to a standard which has no value in itself and produces no feeling of achievement. The boy who is able to congratulate himself on getting fifty per cent. marks (or is it thirty-three?) in simple Latin sentences has lost all sense of educational values. Latin prose and algebra may both cry with the unfortunate infant of churchyard fiction:

If I was so soon to be done for,  
I wonder what I was begun for.

So I should propose to ask the non-literary boy to learn his Latin grammar with a view not to composition, but to reading: it will be equally necessary that it should be learnt accurately.

And here let me repeat that for every reason I would far rather teach him Greek than Latin. The question as between the two languages has, for the historical reasons given, never been fairly argued: the defenders of the classics fought blindly for both, and their opponents naturally assailed the language which was least strongly entrenched. It seems to me that a very strong case can be made for the preference being given to Greek, when one classical language only is to be studied.

I can only repeat my conviction that, so far as Latin is concerned, long before the goal of real appreciation is reached, the bones of such students will be found bleaching on the long and dreary road which leads through Cæsar and Nepos and Ovid. To condemn a boy in the name of culture to read second rate literature is a contradiction in terms, but the *reductio ad absurdum* still plays its part in English education.

When you turn to Greek the prospect is vastly different. The great Greeks are gloriously simple, partly because of the lucidity of their language, and partly because of the clarity of their thought, and for a boy to have even a bowing acquaintance with Homer, Herodotus, Aristophanes and Plato is to open out new literary horizons such as Keats beheld when he first "heard Chapman speak out loud and bold."

I can testify from practical experience that it is possible to get a boy who knows no Greek to read

these authors with intelligence and appreciation in two years by six hours' work a week in school: it is quite true that these boys were of some slight literary ability, and that it would take longer with their non-literary friends, but, as Socrates said, "Fair is the prize and the hope great"; so long as we teach them the sort of Latin we teach them now, the prize is of doubtful value and the hope infinitesimal.

The main argument on the other side is that to begin a new language is to impose a new strain, especially when it involves learning a new alphabet. The latter point is not a strong one, for the process is rapid, and it is probably true that the novelty would be attractive rather than the reverse: nor is it impossible that the preparatory schools would be willing to teach it. But I should not personally break my heart if they learnt Latin there altogether and not Greek.

Here, then, is my programme for the scientific boy: he should learn Latin (or preferably Greek) grammar, and be able to construe his chosen classical language with reasonable fluency and accuracy, but should make no attempts at composition in it. He should learn, at some time in his career, a modern language: he should be taught history and English, and would probably be able to give to them some of the time saved from classical composition: for the rest, let him have as much science and mathematics as his instructors wish to give him, and of the type which, in their wisdom, they deem best. My stric-



tures upon time wasted in the laboratory have, of course, no relevance in his case.

It will be said, no doubt, that this would be all very well if it were possible to divide boys with any accuracy into two classes, the literary and the non-literary, the scientific and the non-scientific. I agree that no such classification can be exact, but I believe that it could be made without substantial injustice. Some will sort themselves without any difficulty, and I believe that these would amount to more than half the whole, for there are more people than is generally supposed who instinctively shudder either at the thought of Latin prose or at that of the internal combustion engine. There will always be a few boys who are equally good at both: if that is so, it will not greatly matter which they study first: they can be trusted not to neglect a subject for which they care. It is probable, if the odds are equal, that they had better give the preference to literature, for it would seem easier to make up the leeway in science. I have known many good scholars who took easily and successfully to science at a comparatively late stage, but I have never known a good scientist revert to literature with enthusiasm.

Then there is the larger class of those who will never be any good at either: I cannot break my heart at the thought that they may be wrongly classified: the scientists thirty years ago thought they could make something of them: they know better now. They are comparable to those unhappy souls whom

Dante encountered at the gate of Hell: "Heaven drives them forth that its beauty should not be impaired, nor does deep Hell receive them"—though I do not presume to suggest which line of study is diabolic and which divine. We can only say with the poet "speak we not of them, but look thou and pass on."

There remains the largest class of all, the residue, those who have reasonable aptitude in either direction, but no very pronounced taste: it is surely obvious that no great harm will be done by assigning them to the class which they at the moment prefer or which their instructors diffidently select for them. After all, adjustments can easily be made after a year's trial.

And what is the alternative? It is that we should go on as at present, attempting to teach all average boys in the same, or a very similar, way, crowding the curriculum with subjects for which they have no aptitude, and starving most of these subjects of the hours which they require. Every schoolmaster agrees that the time-table is congested: and congested it will remain, until some real attempt is made by those concerned to think out the principles on which it should be rationally (and radically) reconstructed.

In old days the theory was that a boy should learn everything about something: the modern theory is that he should know something about everything, and it is high time that that preposterous belief

should be challenged.<sup>1</sup> There are, in fact, very few things which we can declare with certainty that everyone ought to know: there are very many things which it is *desirable* to know, but life is much shorter than either art or knowledge, and it is common sense to cut our coat according to our cloth.

I cannot conceive, for instance, any reason why I should learn why a motor's wheels go round: there is no sort of prospect that I should ever deal with its diseases, and, if I proposed to drive it, the public would have a legitimate grievance: these things being so, who would be the wiser or the happier for my learning a few technical terms? I am encouraged in my belief by remembering that Sir Edward Grey told me that he shared my complete ignorance as to what is meant by a carburetter.

Similarly, I find it needless to burden my memory with astronomical fact: should I temporarily forget whether the earth does or does not go round the moon, the odds are enormous that my neighbour will know and will be glad to put me right: it is all very well to say that I "ought" to know, but it is legitimate for me to inquire who would be the better for my knowledge.

We shall never get on until we clear our minds of this particular kind of cant. There are a very great many subjects of which I know nothing: in some

<sup>1</sup> "It seems to me," wrote Bishop Creighton, "that the soundest principle of education is to begin as far as possible with everything about something. If that is done there is then a chance of a boy learning something about everything: while if we begin at the other end there is no chance at all."

cases I bitterly regret my ignorance: in some I have no feeling of remorse. It is one's duty to try to keep on learning, and any education is a failure which does not encourage that desire, but the field of choice should be kept as wide as possible. What I resent is the assumption that there are certain subjects which have an *a priori* claim on the attention. I believe there are none, and that when you have said that a boy should be able to read and write and do simple arithmetic you have (religious knowledge apart) said everything which you have a right to say. "The one real object of education," said Bishop Creighton, most Socratic of Englishmen, "is to leave a man in the condition of continually asking questions": but a man will only ask questions about the things that interest him. No one could maintain that the old classical education fulfilled that object: and our scientific masters, by assuming that science "ought" to interest everybody, are wasting much time and money to no profitable end. Our business should be to find as soon as possible the type of education in which any particular boy can be trusted to co-operate, and to abandon frankly the belief that we know much better than he does what he ought to learn. Then, and then only, should we be able, without searchings of heart, to make sure that he works as hard as he can.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> It will be observed that I say the *type* of education: a "literary" boy must accept the opinion of his elders as to what literature he should learn, just as a "scientific" boy must learn at first that science which his preceptors prescribe.

## CHAPTER X

### I

It is time to pass from these general considerations to the discussion of particular subjects, and I will give the place of honour to Latin, both for historical reasons and because it is the subject of which I have most experience.

I have already said something of the way in which it should be approached by the non-literary boy: what I have now to say applies to the class which can without a gross abuse of language be described as literary.

But before I begin to deal with the question in detail I should like to put on record a personal conviction that "the intensive method" deserves more consideration than it has yet received. I am not suggesting that a boy should at any given period of his career pursue only one subject, but I am sure that at present he pursues too many at once, and would probably still be doing so even if my suggested reforms were adopted. A language learnt for three or four or even five hours a week is probably a language ill learnt, and I believe that a *concordat* between the teachers of languages would produce results satisfactory to all of them. French is the subject which suffers most under present conditions:

I believe that if it were given a real "run for its money" at some period in a boy's career he would acquire more than under present conditions. Speaking as a teacher of the classics, I would gladly let my French colleague have as much time as he could use at certain stages of the school life, if he would be content with very little at other periods. I should not *entirely* drop the classics at those times, nor do I suggest that he should *entirely* drop French at others: the relative proportions of hours now given could be roughly maintained, but I think he would do more with an occasional ten or twelve hours than with his present steady average of three or four.

I know it will be said that boys forget: it is a fact which no schoolmaster is likely to underrate: but it is at least arguable that they forget most readily what they learn least thoroughly, and such small experiments as I have been able to make have strengthened my conviction that along this road there is a possibility of smoother travelling and quicker progress.

Another general reflection may be added: in all language teaching two objects at least have to be borne in mind, the acquisition of sound grammatical knowledge and the study of the literature concerned. I think it is certain that classical teachers in the past have concentrated too much on the former of these objects. I would not be understood to say a word in disparagement of the importance of grammar: "Latin without tears" is a beautiful aspiration, but it is only in Cloud Cuckoo Land that it is so studied.

But the majority of those who learn Latin spend so much time in studying the dry bark of particular trees that they have no time to observe the beauties of the wood, and indeed often leave school in ignorance that there is any wood to be regarded as beautiful. (I am tempted to recall one of the better errors of a pupil: he was endeavouring to reproduce Tennyson's lines about Virgil,

All the charm of all the Muses  
Often flowering in a lonely word:

but in his hands it came out in the following form:

All the charm of all the Muses  
Flowering in a wood!)

There is no real reason why the two aims should not be pursued concurrently: in fact, as soon as the elements of grammar have been really mastered (preferably by an "intensive" method) rapid reading can hopefully begin. But it is rather seldom that it does so, and the allotted twenty lines of poetry or page of prose are gone through in a manner calculated to fill the youthful mind with a sense of lamentation and mourning and woe.

The remedy would seem to be that two books should be read at the same time, one with a view to studying the language and the other with a view to studying the matter. It is perhaps the schoolmaster's aversion for the crib (as well as his very creditable passion for accuracy) which makes him shy of adopting this method. But the only real way

of abolishing the crib in its sinister sense, is to treat it as an ally: let it be treated by all means as contraband when accurate learning is desired, for it ministers to idleness and is indeed a foe to sound learning in the more elementary stage, but let it be welcomed when it is in itself a good piece of work and is applied to the books selected for rapid reading. Cæsar's campaigns would be a very different story if we could feel that he was really getting on with them, and when his small engagements could be viewed in relation to his tremendous plan.

As has already been observed, it is not easy to find Latin authors who will appeal to the non-expert, for most of the great writers are undeniably difficult; Virgil, like Wordsworth, appeals to a mature taste, and a great deal of Horace only to those who delight in verbal felicity. Cicero is less popular with the young than he deserves to be, and though they all like Tacitus when they get to him, he cannot be called an easy writer. Lucretius is (at times) too good: Lucan (generally) too bad: a diet of Livy soon palls, and though Catullus is (almost) always delightful there is not very much of him: on the other hand there is certainly a great deal too much of Ovid.

It is possible that the classical net should be thrown more widely to include those Christian Fathers and those mediaeval writers whose style is more vigorous than correct: I have long felt that a collection of famous mediaeval documents in Latin



would be of great use to schools: how pleasant it would be to read the great bulls of Boniface VIII in the original! *Ausculata, fili*, and *clericis laicos* are most promising beginnings, and boys would delight in his correspondence with Albert I, the ugly, one-eyed man unfit to be an Emperor (*est homo monoculus et vultu sordido: non potest esse Imperator*): and what of the voluminous writings of Aeneas Sylvius, most human and most lovable of all Renaissance popes? But this suggestion belongs perhaps rather to the field of history.

But I should be quite content to allow the teachers of Latin to choose whatever books they like, provided that they will accept the principle that all books need not, and indeed should not, be read in the same way.

About Latin prose something has already been said: it is a magnificent subject when it reaches the stage at which a piece of good English prose is translated, with whatever success, into something that tries, at least, to be idiomatic language: a great deal is incidentally learnt about English, for the Latins had a directness of thought which we seldom rival. I look back with real pleasure on the hours spent with intelligent pupils in the pursuit.

For the non-intelligent it has a value, but the value is so different that it is a pity that it is called by the same name. "Intellectual gymnastic" has a bad name, but I know of no literary method by which accuracy can be so easily tested and instilled. I think that more use should be made of reproduction

in its teaching, for the boy with a good memory will gain much by the attempt. Let me remind the reader that in the great days of Shrewsbury scholarship—and how great they were the university calendars attest—boys did hardly any composition before they went up for their scholarship examination. They read very widely, and the result showed itself in their composition, as it is bound to do if the verbal memory is good.

Latin verses are a subject much abused, particularly by those who have had little experience of teaching them to the young. In the earlier stages they have all the advantage of a jigsaw puzzle, and a puzzle in which you have the responsibility of constructing the pieces, for a word which is incorrect in grammar will seldom fit. I have rarely known boys dislike them at this stage.

Those who talk, as Lord Stanhope did in his *Life of Pitt*, of “the laborious inutilities of the ancient metres” seem to me to fall under the Apostolic condemnation of those who understand neither what they say, nor whereof they confidently affirm.

The average boy should not pursue them further, but for the scholar the attempt to render English poetry into Latin has very great value: there is no surer way of appreciating the beauties of a poem than by trying to translate it, and Eton has been well advised to give the subject a high value.

## 2

On the subject of Greek I have not much to add to what I have already said. I do not think there can be any doubt that it is the language which a literary boy ought primarily to learn. The chief educational advantage which money now conveys in this country is that Greek is possible for the son of well-to-do parents, and all too seldom, unfortunately, for the poorer boy: a Committee appointed by Mr. Lloyd George when Prime Minister drew attention to the point, but I fear that little has been done in the matter.

There is no denying that there exists in the parental mind a prejudice against Greek, born of the ancient scientific controversy. It should be the business of all intelligent teachers of the classics to remove the prejudice, even though it may mean in some cases undermining a traditional and superstitious veneration for Latin. I recall with amusement my efforts to convince Mr. Winston Churchill, whose achievement in writing admirable English with only the minimum of classical education is a serious stumbling-block to all educational theorists. It would be flattering both of us to suggest that I was entirely successful in my attempt.

Apart from its literary excellence—for Greek is the only literature which can claim to be definitely superior to our own—it has the further advantage of lucidity. Greek prose is a much easier subject than

Latin, and *Oratio Obliqua* ceases to have terrors in so sensible a tongue: it is, in fact, one of the very few subjects of which it is true to say that it only needs to be known to be loved.

Here there is no difficulty in finding subjects suitable for rapid reading: my division at Eton used to aim at getting through half a dozen plays of Euripides in a half, working at it three hours a week. No one would claim that they mastered it all, but at any rate they obtained some real familiarity with a poet who has some claim to be called the most modern of the ancients. I have often thought that if Greek conditions had allowed him to compose dramatic romances in the style of Browning the world of literature would have gained enormously, for he was modern enough to dislike those conventions of the Greek theatre which seem so hampering to us, though he was not, and could hardly have been, great enough to cast them altogether aside.

I only mention Euripides because he happens to be the author with whom I have chiefly experimented on these lines: it is not for me to insult Homer or Herodotus with my paltry praise, or to dilate on the wealth of wit and wisdom to be found in Aristophanes and Plato. Let me rather borrow the words of one who has a right to speak, and remind you that "to the triumph of the Greeks in the contest with Persia we owe whatever is most great and glorious in the subsequent achievements of the human race. And Athens who had fought the battle of the Spirit—by

Spirit we mean the greatness of the soul, liberty, intelligence, civilization, culture, everything which raises men above brutes and slaves, and makes them free beneath the arch of heaven—Athens who had fought and won this battle of the Spirit, became immediately the recognized impersonation of the Spirit itself. Whatever was superb in human nature found its natural home and sphere in Athens.”<sup>1</sup>

Ponder this fact, thinking not only of the names I have mentioned, but of others besides them—of the eloquence of Demosthenes, the majesty of Æschylus and the serenity of Sophocles—and then ask yourself, if you have anything to do with education, whether any boy of literary ability should not be given the opportunity of learning Greek.

## 3

When we turn to modern languages we find French in a position from which no one would wish it to be deposed. On the other hand, I cannot profess to be entirely satisfied with the results of our efforts to teach it. I imagine that we study a modern language with two objects in view—to be able to read its literature and to be able to converse in it with reasonable fluency. The latter object was seldom attained in my schooldays, and though things are better now, there are still a large number of English boys who, after spending a considerable amount of

<sup>1</sup> J. A. Symonds' *Studies of the Greek Poets*, Vol. I, p. 20.

time on the subject, are yet deplorably tongue-tied as soon as they have crossed the Straits of Dover.

It is customary to believe that we are a nation of poor linguists, but it is only courtesy which makes us maintain that the average foreigner speaks English with any approach to success. There are some Englishmen, no doubt, who hold with Dr. Johnson "that a man should not let himself down by speaking a language which he speaks imperfectly," though, for obvious reasons, few follow his example and speak only Latin in France: there may be others who hold the opinion which he endorses, "For anything I see, foreigners are fools!" But most of us would be only too thankful to be able to penetrate the dense cloud of misunderstanding which seems to settle on the nimble Gallic brain when asked to understand our remarks. We are most of us unduly shy, and are disagreeably conscious that the noises which we make compare very unfavourably with those produced by the native, and so we resign ourselves to traversing the country in inglorious silence.

But let me repeat that the laugh is not all on one side. If it is true that an Englishman returned to his native land on seeing "*Pas de Calais*" written up, too hastily assuming that his objective was unattainable, it is on record that a Frenchman refused to leave the boat at Dover because he saw on a newspaper poster the words "COLLAPSE OF KENT." He naturally assumed that the journey to London would, in that case, be perilous, if not impossible.

Teachers in the public schools are somewhat hampered by the knowledge that five weeks in France would do more to produce French conversation than five years at a public school, and by the gloomy suspicion that their pupils know it too. They can, and do, lay a firm foundation of grammatical knowledge, but under ordinary conditions to teach conversational French to large numbers of boys is almost impossible. The home or the preparatory school is the place to acquire an accent: but there are difficulties so far as the latter agency is concerned. If they concentrate on accent they will teach comparatively little grammar, and the public school rather naturally prefers a subject in which knowledge can be tested. If a boy does, or does not, know how to form his plurals and to use his pronouns, we know where we are: but we cannot as yet test his accent on the telephone. But into the merits, and demerits (if any) of the "direct method" it is not for an ignorant conservative to venture.

I confess to some misgivings as to whether enough French is read and whether the type of book chosen is always the best. When I am told that boys must not be encouraged to read Dumas for fear of spoiling their style, I wonder whether the best is not being made the enemy of the good. No one would call Conan Doyle a great master of English prose, but a French boy who read his works with avidity would learn a great deal of English, and Dumas is to Conan Doyle as wine to water (though I should be the last to

deny that there is plenty of spirit in Sherlock Holmes).

In Lord Balfour's *Chapters of Autobiography* may be read the story how his mother introduced her children to Monte Cristo and how the fascination of the story "made us forget we were being introduced to a new language." I do not know on what English literature a French boy is encouraged to begin, but it would be a good exercise for English schoolmasters to make up their own minds what he could be expected to like and apply their results to their selection of French texts.

I have always counted it as a grievance against those who taught me French that I was allowed to reach mature age before I was introduced to the first books of *Les Misérables*. Victor Hugo may not be a very great author, but he does for the Englishman something of what Byron (who may not be a very great poet) does, or did, for the Frenchman, and for somewhat similar reasons.

It would probably be well if more French plays, or scenes from them, were performed by boys: costumes are powerful antidotes to shyness and Molière provides a fine field. Again, it should be remembered that the best way to learn any modern language is to learn a great deal by heart, and boys "escape their own notice," as the Greeks would say, in learning a great deal of French when they think they are only learning how to act. I am afraid that the reasons why "repetition" has so largely gone out



of fashion is the weakness of the pedagogic flesh: there are few more boring ways of spending time than in listening to twenty boys repeating a saying lesson, but its educational value is so great that the effort ought to be made more steadily. Perhaps science will come to our aid and produce some mechanical device by which boys can recite into a dictaphone under the supervision of a drill sergeant, and the master can study the results at his leisure.

It is partly ignorance and partly compassion for my readers which makes me pass lightly over the other modern languages which are commonly studied in schools. German has great practical value for every type of scholar, and has the further advantage that our attempts to speak it do not seem (to us) notably inferior in beauty to the results achieved by the native, but I must add that he finds me, at any rate, as difficult to understand as the Frenchman.

I have no claim to speak of German literature, but I cherish a sneaking conviction that Schiller is a second-rate poet, and that the national admiration for him betrays the leanness of the literary land. But of course, apart from pure literature, German has a very great deal to offer us. It offered us, in fact, so much, and we swallowed it so readily, that before the war we were in danger of suffering from intellectual indigestion. Great as the knowledge of Germans is on every subject I think their influence

has been harmful to our theology, our history, and our literary criticism. They have a habit of hunting their hares to death, which calls for the attention of a literary branch of the R.S.P.C.A., and their laborious monographs fill the foreground so insistently that the whole picture is with difficulty seen.

But this criticism implies no sort of disparagement of the study of the language, and indeed there is hardly any serious student for whom it is not almost indispensable.

The claims of Italian are of an entirely different kind. It is learnt, or should be, because it is in itself undoubtedly the most beautiful of modern languages and because it was largely created by one of the greatest of poets. I retain the conviction which I expressed twenty years ago, "that, with the exception of Shakespeare, Dante is the poet of all modern poets who is best worth reading, and incomparably the greatest writer of any modern language except English."

Again, to learn Italian is to wish to visit Italy, and I believe that there is no more laudable wish of its kind. Dr. Johnson (to quote him once more) may have been wrong in saying that "a man who has not been in Italy is always conscious of an inferiority, from his not having seen what it is expected a man should see," but it is certain that no one who has been there can fail to wish that others should share his experience. There still reigns over Italy the

glamour which inspired Clough's invitation in  
*Amours de Voyage*:

Over the great windy waters, and over the clear crested  
summits,  
Unto the sun and the sky, and unto the perfecter earth,  
Come let us go, to a land wherein gods of the old time  
wandered,  
Where every breath even now changes to ether divine.

It is very desirable that any literary boy should make acquaintance with Dante, and he has the rare advantage of being an extremely "teachable" poet: there is only one caution necessary, and that is that the young student must not linger too long in the *Inferno* or he may share the common but disastrous, and really inexcusable, illusion that Dante is the poet of Hate and not of Love.

No poet loses more by translation: even if you agree with the strange opinion of Sir Walter Raleigh that "if you translate the purest lyrical utterances into any language they still run straight into song," you obviously cannot apply it to the *Divina Commedia*, and in my experience translations of it are at least as likely to repel as to attract; but if you can once master enough Italian to read it with the translation by its side you will find that a little effort has brought a glorious reward.

I feel bound in honesty to comment on the curious fact that, while we schoolmasters habitually deprecate translations and insist on the necessity of study-

ing the original, very few of us have had the industry to learn Hebrew that we may study the Psalms as they were originally written.

## 4

There is no subject in which public school teaching has been so radically and usefully reformed in the present century as that of history. It used to be regarded as one which the ordinary schoolmaster was fitted to expound: this was sometimes true, but sometimes lamentably false, and in any case he received no guidance from any higher authority either as to the methods he should pursue or (except in very general terms) as to the period he should cover. The text-book reigned supreme, and the text-books in use varied much in value. Ancient history came out of it best, for the form masters were classical scholars, but classical scholarship is not in itself a guarantee of an interest in classical history, still less of a capacity to expound it.

English history was the only other history which was seriously studied, and, though the text-books were not always bad, they needed interpretation by an enthusiast if a history lesson was to be more than a bald exposition of facts: and the enthusiasts were rare.

These days are happily over, and history has come into its own. At Eton a marvellous transformation was effected by the genius of the present

Vice-Provost who, starting from the humblest beginnings with a few boys unwillingly allowed to attend his ministrations, has lived to see his subject universally honoured and with no danger to face save those which come from its well-deserved popularity: and what he accomplished at Eton has been paralleled, though not surpassed, elsewhere.

Though it is wrong to "universalize" one's own experience (already recorded), it is safe to assume that it is by no means unique, and indeed there can be no doubt that to countless boys history has afforded an invaluable escape from the narrow paths of classics to which they were formerly confined. It is a subject so delightful that there is a danger of its being too popular: the figures given on a previous page suggest that it is the first choice of the average boy, and the average boy is not above being swayed in his choice by the "easiness" of a subject: in other words it is in danger of becoming a "soft option."

If I allude to this danger, it is not because I have the least doubt that it is far better for most boys to study something which can hardly fail to arouse their interest, even if it does not always "extend" them to the full, than to be forced for all their school days to work hard at something which is uncongenial. The best teachers of history—and they are very good—are quite alive to the danger; experiments are being made in combining the right type of language teaching with historical work, and I see no reason to doubt that a really successful programme will before long

be achieved: very likely there are schools in which the problem has already received a satisfactory answer.

There are two other warnings which I feel ought to be given: in the first place it is probably unwise for any boy who can become a good scholar either in classics or modern languages to take to history, however much it may attract him, as soon as he has passed the School Certificate stage: he will probably be wise to pursue those studies to scholarship level (if he can) and then study history for his last year. I think this is an opinion which is shared by many wise teachers of history, and it is certainly a course which I have known pursued with remarkable success.

Again, it may be doubted whether three years' history at school, followed by three years' history at the university, is not in danger of proving an overdose. This is mainly a matter for the universities to consider, but it is an argument that at all stages the subject requires stiffening by some corrective study. There is some reason in the warning uttered by a by no means hostile critic—"The truth about history is that the subject does not *necessitate* any real mental effort. To read what Mr. So-and-So says about King What's-his-name, and what Mr. Dash thinks about Prime Minister Blank is pleasant, indeed, and very possibly profitable, but it can be continuously done in an armchair, and that is not a seat of learning, at any rate, not for boys."

It might be added that in these days we are increasingly asked to perpend what Mr. Dash says about Mr. So-and-So, which is a degree further removed from truth, and that the prodigious wealth of material makes it increasingly difficult for the student to form any opinion which can really be called his own.

Browning was not altogether wrong when he made Mr. Sludge complain that his embroideries of the truth were not altogether unlike those to which some of the greatest historians resort.

But why do I mount to poets? Take plain prose—  
Dealers in common sense, set those at work,  
What can they do without their helpful lies?

There's plenty of "How did you contrive to grasp  
The thread which led you through this labyrinth?  
How build such solid fabric out of air?  
How on such slight foundation found this tale,  
Biography, narrative? or, in other words,  
How many lies did it require to make  
The portly truth you here present us with?"

But how happily we surrender ourselves to any historian who, not content with merely recounting the facts, enables us to see once more the men of distant ages in their fashion as they lived! He may inspire us with his own prejudices, and those prejudices may be mistaken, but no amount of prejudice should blind us to our incalculable debt to Macaulay, for it was he who gave us that love for history which enables us to correct his mistakes.

Lord Balfour has put on record his debt to Macaulay's Essays and to their unrivalled power of stimulating interest in a literary boy: few will be disposed to quarrel with his description of the author as "a showman of supreme genius."

The name of Macaulay inevitably suggests that of Trevelyan, and for the moment I am not thinking of the historian of the Italian revolution—so supremely fortunate in his subject and in his perfect equipment for his task—but of his father, who on a smaller scale showed how to make past history live. It is not only that in his Charles James Fox he recreated the last days of the eighteenth century with such marvellous skill that one cannot but regret that he felt bound to desert him for America, but that in a work too little known he made the ancient Greek republics, those "peppery little states," live before our eyes as only a true historian can.

No one who has read *A Holiday Among Some Old Friends* can forget the picture of the honest Bœotian general "stringing together platitudes about patriotism, and tutelary gods and ancestral ashes" before a battle, or of Brasidas running out to his last victory with a hundred and fifty picked soldiers at his heels, or of the Athenian soldier "humming a bar of the Pæan, wondering whether his widow would marry again; and hoping that the cobbler on his right might not turn tail, or the teacher of gymnastics on his left shove him out of the line."

For another reason let me give myself the pleasure



of quoting his account of the battle of Marathon. "The threatened city was true to herself. Her able-bodied sons turned out to a man, and marched quietly forth to make appeal to the god of battles. Shopkeepers and mechanics, artists, merchants and farmers, they took down their spears and shields, pocketed their biscuit and saltfish, kissed their children, and walked through their doors without any notion that they were going to take part in an affair which all coming generations would remember with gratitude and admiration: and, when they came to the sacred Plain of Marathon, they did not stop to count the odds; but went at a run straight into the midst of the twenty myriads of Medes and Phœnicians. Out of breath, but not of heart—with such line as they could keep, and with so much martial science as a city militia might recall in the heat of contest—they fought foot to foot and beard to beard, until the conquerors of the world broke and fled. And that very night they marched home to their suppers—all save one hundred and ninety-two, who were lying with clenched teeth and knit brows, and wounds all in the front, on the threshold of their dear country, where it becomes brave men to lie."

I have spoken of Sir George Trevelyan<sup>1</sup> at such length not because he is what would be technically called a "great" historian, but because he possesses

<sup>1</sup> There are moments when Sir George's admiration for Macaulay leads him to parody his style, e.g., "a cause for which Charles Townshend did not care one of the straws in which his own champagne bottles were packed."

to a singular degree that vivifying power which gives history its charm, and because he shows, what a Germanized historian is apt to forget, that great knowledge of a person or a period can be lightly borne: sometimes his two favourite periods are happily combined, as when he parodies the *Knights* to describe the Englishman of a bygone day:

We much revere our sires, who were a mighty race of  
men:

For every glass of port we drink they little thought of  
ten.

And therefore both by land and sea their match they  
rarely met,

But made the name of Britain great, and ran her deep  
in debt.

But I must not let myself be drawn away from my main subject by the pious pleasure of quoting from those writers who have done most to endear it to me. The field of history is so vast that everyone can, and indeed must, select his favourite period. It may be a mere weakness of the flesh which makes me lose my enthusiasm as the middle ages pass away and documents become so plentiful as to reveal the full complexity of human nature, and to make all judgments precarious.

My heart is with the Hohenstaufen in their titanic duel against the Papacy, with Leo the Isaurian, the forgotten saviour of Europe, or with the incredible family of Guiscard in their successful search for kingdoms. In my young days all these

things were hid from our eyes: there was no one to tell us how Heraclius saved the Roman Empire by succeeding where Crassus had failed, or how in the moment of victory he was met by that challenge of Mahomet which marks the true end of "ancient" history: thanks to Gibbon, the marvellous Eastern Empire was regarded as a somewhat discreditable affair, and we were allowed to believe that the greatest achievement of the Normans was the battle of Hastings.

These scandals have been removed, and the new conception of history opens up horizons of which we never dreamt: no wonder that the subject is popular: in its wise development lies the best hope for the education of the average boy.

## 5

When we pause to consider the teaching of English we enter a field which is equally vast and far less ably charted. Everyone agrees that English must be taught, but there is extremely little agreement as to the methods which should be employed. Having spent a good many years in the attempt, with boys of every age and every type of capacity, I have no illuminating conclusions to report: there are moments when I feel that the only certain qualification for such a teacher is a love for his subject, and others, gloomier still, when I feel that the only boy who is sure to be well-educated in English literature

is the one who is made to spend much of his time in a good library.

For of course the object of all our teaching must be to create in boys a desire to read for themselves, and, I suppose we must add, to read good books.

It might be thought that the sure method was to display one's own enthusiasms in the hope that they will prove infectious: and that is probably true, but we have to reckon with the curious perversity of the average English boy. To be told by his preceptor that a poem is superb rouses in him an instant feeling of antagonism: if the poem is in a foreign tongue, he may accept the verdict without interest: but he feels entitled (as indeed he is) to an opinion about his own language, and his instinct is to resent dictation. It is on the whole safer to tell him that you think the poem good, but that he will probably not be able to appreciate its merits: then his combative instinct is aroused and he feels that by appreciating it he has registered a mild triumph over his teacher: he was wrong on one point, at any rate! I do not imagine that this mild and friendly antagonism exists in girls' schools: girls seem, perhaps with reason, to admire their teachers more than their brothers do.

Next comes the perilous question how far he can be encouraged, or indeed allowed, to like what you think is second-rate. There are some teachers whose consciences are so tender that it pains them even to simulate approval of Scott or Macaulay's *Lays*: I think that even if these works were as cheap as they

think (which I am very far indeed from admitting) they should welcome any appreciation which they evoke. I remember reading, with something like nausea, the complacent comment of a young teacher whose boys had been reading *Marmion*, "They soon saw through this fustian": a teacher of English who can forget that fustian is very difficult to see through is unfit for his post, and he has no business to forget that many great poets both liked and wrote, as boys, verses for which fustian would be a complimentary epithet.

The truth, no doubt, is that taste is a plant of slow growth: there is an Old Dispensation which has to be passed through before the New can be appreciated, and it may be that the poems of Ella Wheeler Wilcox serve the same preparatory purposes for a literary boy as the more blood-thirsty rites of primitive Israel served for the religious Jew.

We ought to recognize that there are some poets who are definitely poets for the mature taste: I have already suggested that the young will probably like Wordsworth as little as they like Virgil, or, if they like either, will like the wrong passages for the wrong reason. There is something, in fact a great deal, to be said for making boys learn by heart, in days when the memory is retentive, poetry which they do not appreciate at the time, but we must not be impatient or disappointed if knowledge comes but appreciation lingers.

It is probably true to say that the poems which

boys most easily appreciate are those which have a very definite rhythm, and probably those which rhyme. Here I know that I am exposing myself to the full blast of modern criticism. I had better confess once for all that I find modern poetry very difficult to read, and impossible to remember, and I have always been accustomed to regard a poem as good—not “good absolutely,” but at any rate “good for me”—which fixes itself upon the memory without much conscious effort. I am quite conscious that I may be entirely wrong: after a certain age all but the most fortunate drift into conservatism, whether they wish it or no, and find the enthusiasms of a younger generation increasingly difficult to understand. So I cannot be sure whether, as Mr. Kipling’s soldier said,

It’s only my fancy or not,

but I am inclined to believe that, so far as poetry is concerned, we have fallen upon one of those blank periods which diversify the history of every literary nation. I look forward to a day when we shall again be allowed without fear of censure

To browse along from thyme to thyme  
In the great Paradise of Rhyme.

Holding, with whatever justification, this particular conviction, I am not unduly depressed by the modern prejudice against rhyme and rhythm, and I should continue to maintain that the easiest and

safest approach for the teacher of English is through the metrical sense. Most boys possess it, and almost all can acquire it, and when it is once acquired it opens the way to a very great deal of pleasure, even though that pleasure may not be of the most refined quality.

I should myself make the most of this possession and use it as a starting point: it is well worth while to invite a boy to consider the difference of the impression he receives from the lines,

So all day long the noise of battle rolled  
Among the mountains by the winter sea,

from that derived from the same lines with a syllable omitted,

All day long the noise of battle rolled about the winter  
sea,

or, conversely, the difference between

Comrades, leave me here a little while as yet 'tis early  
dawn,

with

Friends, leave me here a little, while as yet  
'Tis early dawn.

He will appreciate the pace at which the knights trotted into the fight:

Close around him and confound him, the confounder of  
us all!

Pelt him, pummel him and maul him, rummage, ransack,  
overhaul him,

and be able to contrast it with the canter of Tennyson's Lincolnshire farmer,

Dosn't thou 'ear my 'erses legs, as they canters awaay?  
"Property, property, property"—that's what I 'ears 'em  
saay,<sup>1</sup>

or with the speed of Browning's riders from Ghent to Aix.

I am well aware that old-fashioned talk about trochees, dactyls and spondees is abhorred by the modern prosodist: but I speak as a poor teacher, not as a professor, and I believe that the metrical scheme suggested and exemplified in the *Eton Poetry Book* is that which the young find it easy to grasp. It seems to me they cannot fail to gain greatly by studying the vicissitudes of the heroic couplet from its first emergence in Chaucer, through the days of its eighteenth century predominance, to its appearance, changed yet still fundamentally the same, in *Endymion*, *The Happy Warrior* and *My Last Duchess*.

<sup>1</sup> I have taken the great liberty of altering Tennyson's spelling, for "propuppy" not only obscures the metre, but conceals from the southerner that the farmer is urging his son to marry a lady of means: the Lincolnshire tradition is strong that the poet himself read the word with a strong accent on the first syllable.



## 6

If we find it difficult to agree as to what type of writing we should teach boys to emulate it may be easier to agree as to what they should avoid: the value of words is best shown by comparison: it is, for example, a good exercise for a boy to consider what is the reason of the difference produced by the title *The Ancient Mariner* and that of *The Old Sailor*.

In this case there is no question of merit or demerit, but to set side by side translations of the same passage often leads to more startling discoveries. The Psalmist, for example, wrote, "He rode upon the cherubims and did fly: he came flying upon the wings of the wind." This was rendered by one of the earliest of those who translated the Psalter into verse:

On cherubs and on cherubim  
Full royally he rode,  
And on the wings of mighty winds  
Came flying all abroad.

Let us compare this with the later version of Tate and Brady:

The chariot of the Lord of Hosts,  
Which troops of active angels drew,  
Upon a tempest's mighty wings  
With most amazing swiftness flew.

It would be a very useful exercise to explain precisely what has happened, but a boy who does not see that

*something* very remarkable has occurred had better return to his laboratory, and when the time comes, ask someone else to put his scientific discoveries into English.

There is one psalm in particular, the twenty-third, which has been so often translated as to serve as a good standard of taste. We can trace it from the early metrical versions to the familiar hymn,

The King of Love my Shepherd is,

passing on the way George Herbert's beautiful version, and Addison's stately rendering in the best eighteenth century tradition. It is a long way from the peaceful rivers which

soft and slow  
Amid the verdant landscape flow

to the simplicity of the old Scottish version, which begins,

The Lord's my shepherd, I'll not want;  
He makes me down to lie  
In pastures green, and leadeth me  
The pleasant waters by

and the student will at least know something about his own taste when he has been encouraged to make the comparison.

If the Greek poet was right in saying that there are countless ways of being bad but only one of being good, we may assume that there is one right way of saying anything in poetry and innumerable possi-

bilities of error. The young student may be profitably employed in deciding what precisely is the mistake which makes any given poet ridiculous at any given time, provided that he does not allow occasional errors of taste or judgment to spoil his appreciation of a great writer.

It is clear, for instance, that Tennyson was wrong when he makes a lady, in choosing "a lily or a rose" to please her lover say,

For he will see them on to-night,

but interesting to discover where the vulgarity lies: it is easier to see similar and grosser faults when Wordsworth writes,

A household tub, like one of those  
Which women use to wash their clothes.

Landor once told Lowell that he said to the poet, "Mr. Wordsworth, a man may mix poetry with prose as much as he pleases, and it will only elevate and enliven: but the moment he mixes a particle of prose with poetry, it precipitates the whole." The bard of Rydal never forgave the critic and did not take the hint, or he would not have begun many of his poems with lines of which

We had a female passenger who came  
is a fair sample.

For vulgarity Leigh Hunt is generally held to take the palm with his amazing couplet,

The two divinest things that man has got—  
A lovely woman in a rural spot,

but besides vulgarity there is a bathos which is not vulgar: when Dryden wrote

The Eternal heard, and from the heavenly quire  
Chose out the cherub with the flaming sword,  
And bade him swiftly drive the approaching fire  
From where our naval magazines were stored,

there was no vulgarity in his bathos: if you wish for the combination you must turn to

How will sweet Ovid's ghost be pleased to hear  
His fame augmented by a British peer!

or

And thou, Dalhousie, the great God of War,  
Lieutenant-Colonel to the Earl of Mar:

or

Graced as thou art, with all the power of words,  
So known, so honoured, at the House of Lords.

And then there is bombast, so glorious in Marlowe, but even with him so easily degenerating into absurdity: let Dryden again give an example of how feeble force can be:

Where'er thou stand'st, I'll level at that place  
My gushing blood, and spout it at thy face;  
Thus not by marriage we our blood will join,  
Nay more, my arms shall throw my head at thine.

I have quoted all these dreadful lines to emphasize my point that there are other ways of beginning a poetry course than by inviting attention to masterpieces: I am not even sure that it is not always wiser to begin a little below the summits of Olympus. I mentioned Marlowe just now, and, though of course Sir William Watson (that strangely unappreciated

poet) is perfectly right in contrasting his "gong and cymbals din" with "the gradual violin" of Shakespeare, he is at times so superlatively good, and his goodness so superlatively simple, that I should give him a high place among the authors to be read in school. He involves no psychological problems, and in him the young student can observe the magic of words, now used with the mastery of genius and now as vigorously abused.

I need hardly say that in these few pages I have not been attempting to describe how English should be taught; but only to illustrate some lines of approach which are likely to stimulate interest. I know no harder subject for the teacher: he has always to bear in mind the wise warning of an Oxford thinker—"the teaching of English perpetually trembles on the verge of absurdity: it is not that the teaching of English is in itself more absurd than the teaching of any other literature, but the absurdity is more easily detected."

It can truly be maintained that a large part of education consists in the hopeful throwing of flies: for many weary weeks the angler will have no rise to reward him, but at intervals there will come the unexpected arousing of a taste or the discovery of some latent talent. I am always encouraged by a small reminiscence of my own, which, though it is not strictly educational, has, I think, some comfort for the educator. Till I was well over thirty, I took no interest whatever in furniture, and regarded it from

a purely utilitarian standpoint. Then, as it happened, I had to furnish a house and was guided by a friend, to whom I cannot be sufficiently grateful, to an old furniture shop: then and there I discovered a latent taste which, though I have no sort of claim to expert knowledge, has been one of the greatest pleasures of my subsequent life. Similarly, I believe that most people have tastes of which they are unconscious, and it may well be the schoolmaster's happy lot to help them to the discovery.

He will often be mistaken in the capabilities of his pupils: even Samuel, it is recorded, was deceived by the attractive appearance of Shammah: and there are many Shammahs in all public schools, though seldom bearing so appropriate a name: but the schoolmaster is very unlucky if he does not come across an occasional David.

## CHAPTER XI

### I

IN an earlier work I mentioned that I belonged to the two most criticized professions, and that a clerical schoolmaster offers four cheeks to the smiter. This book has equally a twofold character: there are some, probably, who will lay it aside when the scholastic part is ended, should they get so far: but that will be a pity, for they can probably do more to help the Church of England than they can to reform the public schools.

While it has never been safe to assume that Englishmen believed in the public school system, it is becoming equally unsafe to assume that they believe in the Church of England, or indeed in religion as a whole. It must seem somewhat ridiculous to find only one chapter devoted to religion, after all those expended on education. My excuse must be that I have already in several short books<sup>1</sup> tried to expound my religious convictions, and do not wish merely to repeat myself. If, conversely, I am asked why I write of religion at all in this volume, it is because I am continually infuriated by those who

<sup>1</sup> e.g., *Elementary Christianity, Doubts and Difficulties, The Fool Hath Said.*

regard the Christian religion generally as an outworn superstition, existing on the sufferance of some eminent scientists, and the Church of England in particular as representing a somewhat discreditable *pis aller*. If there are any readers who have borne with me thus long as a schoolmaster, I would ask them to bear with me for a few pages in the capacity of a parson, for, though I cannot hope to carry much conviction in so short a space, I should like to put on record my conviction (*a*) that the Church of England is a body which any sensible Christian may be proud to serve, (*b*) that the theory that religion in general, and the Christian religion in particular, is out of date, is at least as silly as most popular superstitions. I do not flatter myself that my support is of any great intellectual value, but for whatever it may be worth it is at any rate wholehearted.

The Church of England, like the public schools (to both of which institutions I have a kindred allegiance) seems to me to be disastrously underrated by the average Englishman.

They are open to very similar criticisms: if the public schools are thought to seek an unworthy compromise between training the character and training the mind, it is a commonplace to suggest that the Church of England aims at an impossible compromise between Catholicism and Protestantism. Both charges seem to me unjust: it would be as



sensible to say that the British Constitution aims at an impossible compromise between Monarchy and Democracy. The fact is that all three are typical products of the national genius, and I am patriotic enough to believe that that genius has not led us astray.

I am quite as proud of the Church of England as I am of the public schools, not because I am blind to their faults, but because I see in them the recognition of a true ideal, and know that both are capable of realizing their own weaknesses and amending them. I see the obvious convenience of an infallible guidance, but I see no sort of reason for believing that it is guaranteed by the Gospels or that it is ultimately effective in practice. I see the enormous difficulties of reconciling revealed Truth with modern discovery, but I hold that, as all truth is ultimately one, to be afraid of any truth is to sin against the Holy Spirit.

This is a cardinal doctrine of the Church of England: it confessedly fails, and may continue for many years to fail, to work out a complete synthesis, but it is at least not open to the charge of that particular blasphemy.

It makes the heroic attempt to combine loyalty to the past with appreciation of the present: it fails, as any institution which fallible human beings administer must fail, to judge intellectual situations with certainty: but it is unfaltering in its allegiance to the truth once revealed to the saints, and believes

that "God has yet more truth to break forth from His Holy Word."

To criticize such a body for its uncertainties is to assume that the knowledge of God is a static thing, and that when Christ said that he had "yet many things" to tell his disciples he did not mean what he said, or meant them to be communicated by a method completely at variance with his own. Nothing can be more clear than that Our Lord's teaching was couched in a form which encouraged his hearers to use their brains, and that he valued the effort at least as much as its result. Otherwise he could not have so completely refrained from legislating in detail and confined himself so completely to laying down principles of eternal value.

To those principles the Church of England endeavours to be true: the sneers at its origin in the sixteenth century are as unworthy as those at its tentative efforts to-day: the vacillations of a Cranmer and the lusts of Henry VIII are innocent compared to the iniquities of the mediaeval papacy: and few would deny that the blame for the sins of Protestantism must at least be shared by those whose conduct provoked it. It would be very unfair to forget that the Roman Church at last admitted the grievances and reformed many of the abuses: but they must be borne in mind if any fair judgment is to be passed upon the English reformers.

National churches are, or should be, a contradiction in terms: no English churchman can fail to have

respect for the great and glorious devotion of the Church of Rome, but as long as that Church maintains that we are no church at all, so long I think will it be evident that it prefers a position of tactical advantage to one of real Christianity. The gain may be great, but it is very dearly bought.

For this unhappy division we can accept none of the blame: we have no wish to be controversial, but we are bound to maintain that the specific claims of the Church of Rome are based neither on the authority of Scripture, nor on the evidence of history, and are incompatible with what we believe ourselves to know of the spirit of Christ.

For the alienation of the Free Churches we are ourselves in great measure to blame. The history of the end of the seventeenth century, and of the eighteenth, is sad reading for English churchmen, and it is impossible to be surprised that our lack of Christian charity and, one might add, of Christian common sense, has had its lamentable results. The love of freedom is one with which we all sympathize, and though it seems to us, in some cases, to have had some of the results which Plato foresaw when he spoke of the State in which "all things were ready to burst with liberty" there is good reason to hope that the better feeling now existing will in due time bring about a reconciliation with no sacrifice of fundamental principle.

The main distinguishing characteristics of our Church are in the words of the Bishop of Bradford,

whom I am proud to claim as an old pupil, (1) the sense of history, (2) the sense of apostolicity, (3) the sense of mystery, (4) the sense of controlled freedom. I agree with his view that "the combination of these qualities exists nowhere else in the same degree as it exists among us."

That is why I believe that in the providence of God the Church of England, small as it is, may yet form the rallying point for the reunion of Christendom, and that is why I am proud to be its humble servant.

One other word: I have said that I do not think that English people appreciate what they owe to their Church nor the essentially honest character of its position. Nor are they as grateful as they should be for all that it does for them. I have no right to speak for the parochial clergy, and no sort of desire to claim for them a monopoly of Christian virtues in their parishes. But I think that the Archbishop of York is right when he claims for them and for other Christian workers more credit than their countrymen are usually ready to allow. After saying that of course a large number of people outside the churches are more public spirited than great numbers inside, he goes on, "But it is also true that when you ask who are doing the day-to-day drudgery of social service or promotion of good causes, you find that the great majority of them are convinced Christians and loyal members of a definite congregation. Too many professing Christians are doing nothing of the sort;

and not enough is being done. But nine-tenths of what is being done is done by Christians and in the inspiration of their Christianity.”

I hope that one or two who read this book may be led to realize how much their help and sympathy could mean in their own parishes if they would lay aside their critical attitude and give more definite support to those who are trying, under great difficulties, to prove in action the truth of the Christian Gospel.

## 2

The scientific atmosphere of the age in which we live is very unfavourable to religion, and encourages a frame of mind which believes that science holds the answer to all questions, or will hold it very soon. If I venture, greatly daring, to attempt to show the falsity of this belief, it is not because I am either a great theologian or even a tolerable scientist, but because it appears to me that the assumption on which it is based is demonstrably unsound, and involves a complete misunderstanding of the respective objects of religion and science.

The long-standing controversy between Religion and Science has done a great deal of harm—much

NOTE.—The substance of this section has appeared in the *Newcastle Chronicle*: I am very grateful to its proprietors for their permission to reprint it.

practical harm to religion, and a certain amount of moral harm to science. For this result both parties are to blame, religious people for the attempts which they once made to restrain science from perfectly legitimate inquiry, and scientific people for ill-informed attacks upon a subject which they had made no effort to understand.

It is curious that both sides fell into precisely those errors which they might have been expected to avoid: the champions of religion showed a most irreligious lack of charity, and the champions of science adopted a very unscientific attitude: for it is, or should be, a first principle of religion to welcome any honest search for truth, and it is a cardinal principle of science not to despise or neglect any facts, however inconvenient. The religious instinct and its manifestations are undeniable facts, and as such demand reverent study: on the other hand all new truths must help Christians to increase their knowledge of Him who is the Truth.

In its early stages the controversy was deplorably mishandled, and the first blame must rest on those who rushed into the fray to maintain the scientific accuracy of Genesis, which has never been an article of faith, and to denounce, as unchristian, theories of evolution which had in fact been suggested by great Christian writers as early as St. Augustine. This attitude provoked inevitable reprisals, and scientists were found to declare that Matter and Mechanism were the only realities and

that the belief in religion, and indeed in everything spiritual, was a superstition soon to be outgrown.

This phase of the controversy has left its mark upon all subsequent discussion; there are still Christians who believe science to be essentially irreligious and adopt what is called a Fundamentalist attitude: there are still scientists who regard religion as unworthy of discussion and Materialism as the only possible creed for a thinking man. But both these sections of their respective parties are hopelessly out of date: science is no longer materialistic, or, if it is, the matter of which it speaks has no recognizable connection with that of the old Materialists: psychology has taken its place among the sciences, and is quite as unwilling as religion to regard the phenomena which it studies as mere illusion: and on the other hand most Christians no longer feel that Genesis as interpreted by Milton in *Paradise Lost* has any claim to represent their scientific belief.

The wiser sort of scientist and the wiser sort of Christian are anxious for a reconciliation: the danger is that this very right desire may lead to some very confused thinking. It is right for religious people to welcome the changed attitude of the great scientists, and to rejoice that they no longer seem to bar the door against religion, but it would be wrong to exaggerate the support which they are prepared to give. If it was—as it certainly was—a mistake to try to build religion on “the gaps in science,” which gaps are likely to be progressively filled, it is equally a

mistake to hail the tentative hints given by great scientists like Eddington and Jeans as if they meant that the age of controversy was over and harmony completely restored.

Our line should be that recorded by a great statesman as practised by his mother when instructing her children: "she never took refuge in bad science when good science appeared to raise awkward questions: and never surrendered her own conviction as to the inestimable value of her central religious beliefs."<sup>1</sup>

As it seems to me, the only chance of a satisfactory *modus vivendi* lies in our recognizing once for all that science and religion deal with different questions and that there must always be a certain disharmony between them. I have often in the past used the simile of a jigsaw puzzle, the workers at which may very naturally fail to see any connection between the parts at which they are severally working: those who are trying to put together the background will be merely perplexed by pieces which belong to the central figure, whatever it may be, and those who are working on the sky will reject as useless the pieces which will ultimately make the grass.

In the same way, the search for Truth is a very many-sided affair: we may have our own conceptions as to what the picture is about, and we shall not know the full answer until the picture is completely finished: all that we can do is, in our respective

<sup>1</sup> Lord Balfour's *Chapters of Autobiography*.



spheres, to fit together those pieces of the puzzle which undoubtedly cohere, and to insist that they must find a place in the whole when it is ultimately completed. We have a perfect right to our own opinion of the superior importance of the part at which we ourselves are working: but so have other people: and we have no right to deny the reality or the importance of the work which they are doing.

To develop this simile a little, Christians are bound to believe that in the centre of a completed picture there will be found a Figure on a Cross, but that Figure will not be seen in its true glory until the flowers in the foreground and the clouds in the background have each been fitted into their place. The picture at which we are working is, we are bound to believe, a coherent whole in which each detail has its value and its meaning.

If we attempt to look at the matter from this point of view, we shall see that Religion and Science set before themselves entirely different questions, and shall no longer be surprised at the difference between the answers which they give. Science is concerned with the question *How*: religion is concerned with the question *Why*. Both questions are extremely interesting, and extremely important, but it is obvious that they are not the same.

The difference is perhaps most clearly seen in the sphere of art. Science, if it looks at a great picture, can tell you how the pigments have been made and can explain the effect of the various colours on the

eye, but it is not interested in the question why one picture is a mere daub and another a masterpiece. Similarly, in the field of music, science can do much to explain the mysterious processes by which sounds reach the brain, and the mechanism by which such sounds are produced: but it is not concerned with the problem why some combinations of sound have the power to stir human nature to its depths. Browning may have been wrong when he saw in such results

“The finger of God, a flash of the will that can,”

enabling a musician “out of three sounds to frame, not a fourth sound, but a star,” but in any case the process is one with which science, as such, has no concern. Again, to take a still simpler illustration, the mystery of poetry is one outside the scientific ken: science can tell you the origin of words, but the scientific man, in his purely scientific capacity, can give you no explanation why we are so deeply stirred by such simple phrases as

Old unhappy far off things  
And battles long ago

or wherein lies the magic of the lines:

But at my back I always hear  
Time's wingèd chariot hurrying near,  
And yonder all before us lie  
Deserts of vast eternity.

The fact is that we have allowed ourselves to be hypnotized by the marvellous achievements of science into forgetting how large a part of human life

and human interest lies outside its purview. The questions which most of us take an interest in discussing, such as the relative merits of our favourite authors or composers, or the beauties of nature and art, are completely outside its range. Religion is not, as has often been thought, the only subject which refuses to submit to the scientific sway: all the intellectual and spiritual interests of mankind, and indeed the very search for truth of fact, which is the glory of science, are equally incapable of being brought into any synthesis which science has yet suggested.

If with these thoughts in our mind we return to the particular controversy between Science and Religion, we shall find that the same distinction holds good. Science has a perfect right to tell us How the world was made, though we should remember that it has by no means reached an agreement on the answer which it should give: but it cannot, as science, even offer an opinion as to Why it came into existence. The answer to that question must lie in the Kingdom of Values, and values are entirely unscientific things. The worth of human beings is as much beyond scientific estimate as the worth of the Parthenon or of Bach's B Minor Mass.

It is too often forgotten, both by the opponents of Christianity and by Christians themselves, that Christianity is not only a religion but a faith—not only a machinery for producing good lives but an attempt to explain and to justify the world in which

we live. To forget this is disastrously to narrow the field, and to give room for the characteristically English heresy that religion is a dull thing. False it may conceivably be; futile it has often proved through our inability to translate it into action: dull it can never be. Mr. Fisher in his admirable *History of Europe* is right to condemn the crimes committed in its name, but a faith stands to be judged by its inherent truth or falsehood, not by the actions of those who have served the World or the Devil while claiming to be soldiers of Christ.

No attempt at an explanation of the universe can be satisfactory which denies that it has a purpose, and a plain man may be forgiven for failing to see that purpose has any meaning unless it is connected with a Person. To give such an answer is in a very real sense scientific, for science knows nothing of purpose except as an expression of a personal will.

This is, of course, the great question which lies behind the whole dispute. The Christian holds, with the Jew, that "in the beginning God created" the world in which we live, and endeavours to fulfil the purpose which he believes God had in mind. It is a mistake to suppose that the scientist denies this: he merely says that he is not concerned to answer the question.

In the sphere of ethics the man of science is justified in his efforts to explain how we come to act as we do, and can give us very great help in the process. He is stepping outside his proper sphere if he tries to

explain why we act, or rather why we consider Goodness, however we define it, as a thing worth striving after. The mystery of Goodness—of the preference which all of us, selfish as we are, feel for unselfishness—is entirely beyond his range. To explain it away is to rob all life of its meaning, and in particular to leave completely inexplicable his own unselfish search for Truth, one of the greatest glories of human nature.

It would be a thousand pities if Christian people accepted the view that their beliefs, because they are in the narrow sense unscientific, are incapable of reasoned justification: they may find some encouragement in the words with which Lord Balfour concludes his Gifford Lectures on Theism: "As it is only in a theistic setting that beauty can retain its deepest meaning, and love its brightest lustre, so these great truths of æsthetics and ethics are but half truths, isolated and imperfect, unless we add to them a third. We must hold that reason and the works of reason have their source in God; that from Him they draw their inspiration; and that if they repudiate their origin, by this very act they proclaim their own insufficiency."

## CHAPTER XII

THESE clerical, or, as I should prefer to call them, religious, reflections may have served to prepare the patient reader for my removal to a more strictly ecclesiastical sphere. In the spring of 1933 I was offered the Deanery of Durham and renewed my acquaintance with a cathedral which I had long regarded as the noblest in England. I do not think it is mere local patriotism which makes me question whether so noble a group of buildings, so finely placed, is to be found this side of Athens.<sup>1</sup>

To part with Eton was no easy thing, and I did not lightly sever my long companionship with a band of masters as generous in their friendship as any body of men could be. Nor was it without emotion that I assisted my Division with the last of nearly five hundred Latin proses which we had composed together: our mutual sentiments were mirrored in the following correspondence, part of which at least

<sup>1</sup> It reflects great credit on the London and North Eastern Railway that a traveller (assuming that he can get the Dean of Westminster to see him off at King's Cross) can have luncheon with the Dean of Peterborough, tea with the Dean of York, and dinner with the Dean of Durham, and so be cared for throughout his journey by sons of Trinity College, Oxford.

can be read without difficulty by those whose Latin days are over.

(The occasion, I should explain, was the presentation of a delightful gift from old members of my Division.)

C.A.A. novos honores non sine divino quodam consilio aucupatum, jubent ita salvere universi primae divisionis discipuli, ut neque ipsos respuat, quippe quos exquisitissimis saepius castigaverit suppliciis, neque hoc munusculo prorsus abhorrerre videatur, sed donum quantulumcunque benignus accipiat nec non et multos annos summa laude gratia autoritate floreat.

My reply (literally translated by an Oxford First Class man) ran as follows:

The Dean of Durham (*lit.* the Dunelmense Dean) gives very much greeting to the members of the First Division.

I had received your gift, welcome not only through itself but also pleasing on account of the testimony of a remembering disposition: which I value in such a way that it seems to recall to the mind many (things) nor not also pleasant (things).

What boys! What pupils! Whom it was so far absent that it should irk of continual labour that to their teacher, most unworthy of all (men), they were now willing to return a most distinguished gift, of-such-a-kind-that not even in dreams has he dared to bird-catch anything of the sort.

But for(sooth) to give gifts to the unworthy is not (the part) of wise pupils: nay rather, by how much the more anyone is conscious to himself not to have deserved (anything) by so much the more is he puffed up, especially when it is considered that not now for the first time but

more often (than he has deserved) he has received tokens of the friendship of those listening (to him).

Since which things are so, I pray and beseech the Immortal Gods, than whom there is nothing more conjoined with the safety of the Republic, that in return for so many and so great benefits they may heap up to the members of the First Division, both one-by-one and all-together, riches, health, wives, children, (and) finally, whatsoever is to-be-sought-after, as-being (men) who have shown of-their-own-accord towards me the most ample fruit of a noble disposition.

I was giving (this) at Durham, on the seventh day before the Kalends of January MDCMXXXIV.

Still less can I think unmoved of Eton floodlit at the end of July, of the great buildings of School Yard standing out with unwonted brilliance, and of the Founder's statue looking down on the boys who sang, to the Londonderry Air,

Look down from heaven, O Founder Saint, we pray thee,  
On these thy courts, and this thy well-loved stream,  
Behold in us, who here our homage pay thee,  
The destined children of thy lonely dream.

There is little for me to say of the life of a Dean, nor is there any reason to suppose that the public would be interested in my brief experience. I have not found it to provide that scholarly leisure with which a Deanery is associated in the public mind.

The Cathedral has suffered heavily from the zealots of the Reformation and almost as severely from "reformers" in a less technical sense, who, in the honest but mistaken belief that a Norman



Cathedral should have in it as little as possible that is not Norman, have in the last century parted with much which we could ill afford to lose. To restore some of these losses, to develop the unique beauties of the Banks, to explore and make known the glories of the Monastic Library—these are some of the objects of the Friends of Durham Cathedral: should this book encourage anyone to join that admirable society, it will not (as they say) have been written altogether in vain. At any rate these objects afford some scope for Decanal activity.

We have been allowed by the Church Assembly to retain our estates in the County: partly perhaps as a tribute to the vanished glories of the Palatinate (what other Dean has the custody of a whale, triumphantly claimed by a Bishop of Durham as his royal perquisite?) but mainly on the broad general ground that it would be a pity to add to the number of absentee landlords in a “distressed area.”

And the “distress” of the County makes other and insistent claims: I am proud to think that the Chapter is playing its part in a large scheme for the betterment of the unemployed which has its centre at Hardwick Hall: and though I think the suggestion that my motto should be *Ich dien* was in very doubtful taste, anyone who knows the unemployed of the North must be anxious to serve them if he can.

One small Decanal achievement I record with some pride—the putting of our choir into the purple of the Palatinate. It reminds me of an episode early

in my Eton career, when I was anxious that the College choir should be robed in scarlet. I asked Prince Henry, then a boy in the school, to find out if His Majesty would have any objection. He wrote to me in the holidays saying that the King approved, but unfortunately referred to the change as one to "red hassocks," which left me in some doubt as to what royal sanction had in fact been secured. I acted on the strength of this somewhat ambiguous authorization.

It is curious that (I believe) the only two words which the Anglo-Saxon language has contributed to the service of the Church should be "hassock" and "cassock": the fact may be taken as evidence of our practical sense, for they are two aids with which worship can ill afford to dispense.

I must not break my rule by eulogizing my Chapter, easy and pleasant though that task would be. Canon Beeching, while still at Westminster, issued a little poem entitled *Instructions for the Sunday Afternoon Preacher in Westminster Abbey*, printed in a form to suggest some practical advice. After dealing *inter alia* with the creeds, and advising the preacher to say

That the pleasing hymn which goes by Athanasius' name  
Is a very (something) picture in a very (something) frame,

varying the epithets at his discretion, he arrives at the last verse which carries the legend *How that the pleasure of preaching at Westminster is much en-*

*hanced by the sight of the Dean and Chapter.* It runs as follows:

O 'tis a very noble thing at Westminster to preach,  
To see the Dean and Sub-Dean and the Canons all and  
each;

There's Duckworth, and there's Barnett, and there's  
Henson, bold and bland,  
And there's poor old Beeching fast asleep, with his beard  
upon his hand.

We may not present so imposing a picture, but at least the frame in which the picture is presented to the public is well worthy of inspection. Nor can I remotely imagine what Mr. Priestley meant by advising the tourist not to get out at Durham station.

I am glad that his advice is not generally followed: we have many visitors, some wise and some imperfectly informed. Among the latter may be classed the two distinguished generals, one of whom was heard to say to the other in a whisper as they left the tomb of the Venerable Bede, "But I always thought Adam Bede was a woman."

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